

GOOD GRIEF: A MODEL FOR PASTORAL
TRANSITION AND CONGREGATIONAL
SPIRITUAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

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The context is Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago. The objective is to help congregants navigate grief they may experience during a season of pastoral transition. The methodology for this project used was qualitative research. The instruments that were used were pre- and post-project questionnaires, focus group discussions, and focused journal questions. As a result of this project, participants were able to honor and navigate their collective and individual grief during this season of change, allowing Calvary to move with hope toward the future. Participants were also able to identify grief in other areas of their individual stories.

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I am truly thankful to all who have supported and loved me throughout this entire process. I'm grateful for the wisdom, guidance, and knowledge that has been helpful along this journey.

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To the many mentors who have shared their time and treasure with me throughout the years, leading to this very moment in time: Pastor Willie Runnels, Pastor Michael Runnels, Rev. Dr. John Mendez, Pastor Johnny C. Bush, Rev. Dr. Gary V. Simpson, Rev. Dr. Emma Jordan-Simpson and far too many others to name, I thank you. To the "Goodfellas," my band of brothers, you all have contributed to this work in ways immeasurable and much appreciated.

To the brothers of the Chi Lambda Lambda Chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., may this work meet the expectation of our second cardinal principle.

To the Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago, many thanks for first, taking a chance and allowing me to be your pastor; and secondly, for engaging in this project and the investment that came with seeing it through.

Finally, to my family, my dad John and brother Joseph. There is no other tribe, I would want to be a part of. It is because of you, Runnels and Tennial, that I am who I am, and I owe a debt of gratitude to each of you.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the great cloud of witnesses cheering me on from the balcony of heaven: my mother, Gail Runnels Tennial; my uncles, Larry Runnels and Rev. Calvin Runnels; my aunt, Gwendolyn Runnels Golladay; and the extraordinary woman who birthed them all, my grandmother, Estella Johnson Runnels.

I also dedicate this work to my niece, Charleston Elise Tennial and my nephews, William Jaxson Wheat, and Winston Cole Wheat. It is because of you all that I have not given up.

INTRODUCTION

As a young child in Sunday School, it was customary that we share a Bible verse from memory as we concluded our time of study together. When we could not think of one or someone already shared the one, we memorized for the week, we would recite John 11:35, “Jesus wept.” At that time, we never understood the significance of Jesus weeping or the pain that caused Jesus to weep. We simply recited this verse to ensure that our Sunday School teacher would not push the issue.

As I have grown older, the significance of “Jesus wept” has taken on a completely different meaning for me. The imagery of Jesus weeping is powerful and informs us that although Jesus was fully human and wholly divine, Jesus still experienced grief. Isaiah prophesied that the coming Messiah was “a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.”¹ I contend however, that our congregations are not given the freedom and are not equipped with the tools necessary to express grief. I also believe that we attach grief solely to the death of a loved one and rarely are we given the space to grieve our losses.

The hymn writer writes that we have a friend in Jesus who can carry all our griefs.² However, I submit that grief must also be expressed and processed in community.

¹ Biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise stated, Isaiah 53:3.

² J. M. Scriven, “What A Friend We Have In Jesus,” The New National Baptist Hymnal, 1977, 340.

The expectation to move swiftly to the next thing and not process grief can prove a hinderance to growth and progression.

After doing an extensive study on the context of ministry, it was evident that the Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago was struggling with transition after the retirement of their pastor of forty years. They were not just struggling with transition but were never given the space to appropriately grieve their loss. Quite a few of the congregants suggested the church's struggle was due to the number of congregants who left the church during the last years of the pastor's tenure. The challenge that the church had was not simply because the pastor forcibly retired, but that their church was not unrecognizable for various reasons and there was quite a bit of grief associated with those losses. The symptom of their grief was apparent when it was time to do ministry and be the hands and feet of Christ – their participation severely lacks.

Chapter one explains the ministry focus for this project. It shares the historical background of the congregation and my spiritual journey. It will allow the reader to understand how the thesis was developed and that if the congregation received pastoral care in terms of their experienced grief, particularly concerning the pastoral transition, congregants would then be empowered to do ministry and look forward with hope.

Chapter two allows the readers to understand that God is in transitions. Biblically, we look and observe Deuteronomy 34:8 through Joshua 1:6. The pericope begins with the people mourning Moses and narrates Joshua's ascension into leadership. This was the biblical text reference for two of the five sermons delivered during the pastoral installation celebration and little emphasis was placed on the people mourning.

Chapter three shows its reader how pastoral transitions occurs in other context, specifically the transition in the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church has a papal transition process that all the world watches when it takes place. While it may not be the model for other contexts, there is something to glean from their process, specifically the period of mourning prior to the election of the new Pope.

Chapter four challenges the reader to consider theologically pastoral care and grief. This chapter will examine pastoral care during trauma and grief, specifically in community. The role of the minister or caregiver will be examined, and pastoral care methodology will also be surveyed.

Chapter five gives readers an interdisciplinary approach to grief with a clear understanding of the psychology of grief and various theories of grief. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief will be surveyed, as well Murray Bowen's theory of family systems and how grief can affect this system.

The final chapter, chapter six shares the summary reflections and conclusions based off the implementation of this project. The successes and failures of this project will be discussed. Also included will be recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The purpose of this chapter is to express how the contextual analysis and spiritual autobiography papers intersect in my ministry journey. I will attempt to show how the ministry and experiences of this minister connect to a particular passion for the context. In the contextual section of this chapter, I will identify some of the challenges the congregation is currently facing and follow up with proposed solutions. In the same section of this chapter, I will include my skillset as a pastor and how that connects to the needs of the congregation I serve. In the ministry journey portion of this chapter, I will highlight how my skills and interests inform this project. This chapter and future projects will deal with the issue of pastoral transitions and the grief congregations experience around this, causing them to be stagnant.

Having completed four units of Clinical Pastoral Education, in addition to serving as Pastor in Residence at the Concord Baptist Church of Christ, along with ministerial experiences at my home church, New Zion City Baptist Church in Chicago and Emmanuel Baptist Church in Winston Salem, North Carolina, will inform this project.

Context

My context is the Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago, where I serve as the Senior Pastor, and I have served this church since November 2018 in this capacity. Prior to

being elected pastor, I served this congregation as Interim Pastor for six months. This congregation is made up of primarily seniors, over the age of sixty, with approximately twenty percent of the congregants between the ages of thirty-five and sixty, and another seven percent under the age of thirty.

Calvary would be considered a traditional Baptist church and is an aging congregation with most of the congregants having membership of over forty years. Over the past forty-five years, Calvary has been a predominately Black congregation and has only had three Black pastors in its 129-year history. With that being stated, most of those older members joined Calvary during the transition of the South Shore neighborhood from predominately White German descendants to predominately Black residents. As the neighborhood changed, Calvary changed.

Many of the congregants at one time, lived in the South Shore neighborhood and stories are shared of their walking to church because they resided close to the edifice. However, a large majority of the congregants now commute from the surrounding neighborhoods and as far as the south suburbs of Chicago to attend worship. There are still a very small minority of congregants who still reside in South Shore and the neighboring Hyde Park communities. However, most travel from as far south as Park Forest, Illinois and as far north as Evanston, Illinois.

Being 129 years old and undergoing several changes in identity as well as location, has proven that Calvary has stood and can stand the test of time. Boasting a membership of over 300 congregants at one time, Calvary has seen a significant decline in membership due to life cycles but most importantly due to the tumultuous termination of tenure of the previous pastor. The retirement of Pastor Emeritus caused grief that has

gone unaddressed and unprocessed, therefore causing the congregation to be stagnant in carrying out the work of ministry that was successfully done prior to the retirement.

Calvary was a religious and social hub of the South Shore community during the height of its glory. Ministries were thriving and making an impact in the community. There were partnerships with multiple entities in the surrounding area, including the South Shore Hospital, a small community hospital, directly across the street from the church parking lot. The pastor of Calvary was leader of the South Shore Ministerial Alliance and a very active member of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago. Calvary was represented primarily by the Pastor Emeritus.

One could surmise that Calvary rested on the identity and personality of the Pastor Emeritus for her own identity. The loss of the face of their congregation has caused much grief and despair. Some could argue that the congregation's hope is that their current pastor is a reincarnation of their Pastor Emeritus. The congregation has not appropriately grieved the loss of their beloved Pastor Emeritus and are in search of a replica.

Calvary is what Israel Galindo would define as a high-touch congregation which:

Seek[s] to maintain an intimate feeling among their members. Often, there are strong familial ties in the relationship network and composition of the congregation, such as with a Family-Size church. Communal sharing and sacred places are important, as are traditions and a sense of continuity with the past. This congregation system needs both to love its pastor and to feel loved by the pastor in return.³

³ Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 25.

Galindo argues that the high value placed on intimacy can also hinder a congregation's ability to be professional in its procedures and operational practices. This is precisely the case at Calvary. The pastoral care of the congregation takes place without much thought and planning, however, there are no clear guidelines or procedures outlining what needs to take place, for example, when someone is hospitalized, or when a member of the congregation dies. What happens, most often, is information is passed word of mouth and sometimes the pastor does not find out until someone calls and informs him. However, most frequently, the pastor finds out someone is hospitalized, for example, on Sunday morning, just prior to the start of worship.

When considering ministry opportunities and community outreach, the expectation of the congregation is that the pastor will take the charge and do the heavy lifting, the planning, and the execution, of the ministry opportunities. The pastor has attempted to teach and reinforce Paul's exhortation in Ephesians chapter four, that the work of the pastor is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," not to do all the work of ministry alone. There is a contingency of individuals who will step up and involve themselves in ministry opportunities. However, much of their outreach does not extend outward but remains within the confines of Calvary. When challenged to meet the needs of those in the community, the response always turns back to the pastor being the face of the ministry, as was the case with pastor emeritus.

Ministry Journey

My development professionally and ministerially began as a hospital chaplain. Prior to my work as hospital chaplain, I held positions in radio promotions and government. Having grown up with an extended family full of pastors and preachers, I was adamantly against entering ministry, particularly congregational ministry. However, my interest was piqued when learning of my uncle's role as Chaplain Supervisor at Wake Forest University Medical Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. After getting more clarity about the role and responsibilities of a chaplain, I made a deal, so to speak, with God that I would commit myself to ministry, as long as it was understood that I would not do congregational ministry. I solely restricted myself to either hospital ministry or prison ministry. It was at this point that I decided to return to my undergraduate studies with the intention of attending seminary after graduation.

During the last semester of my undergraduate experience at The Xavier University of Louisiana, I visited Wake Forest University School of Divinity, at the request of my uncle. During the visit, I felt God's call to Wake Divinity and left that visit excited about enrolling there in the fall. It was clear that prison ministry, with a Clinical Pastoral Education extension, was the route I wanted to take as I journeyed into my life of ministry.

During the week leading up to graduation, I received an acceptance letter to the Wake Forest University School of Divinity. In the midst of my excitement, I called my uncle to inform him, at which point he simply responded, "I knew you would...I'll call you back." I would not find out until one week later that in that very moment, he was receiving news himself. He had just learned that he had stage four colon cancer at the age

of forty-four. One month later, I made the move to Winston-Salem, North Carolina and began a fifteen-month long journey with my uncle unto his death, while adhering to and completing the demands of my first year of divinity school. It was during this arduous period that I began to look closely at hospital chaplaincy while simultaneously earning a deeper appreciation of Carl Jung's "wounded healer." It was this experience that gave me the tools to serve the patients and families I would provide compassionate care to at Illinois Masonic Medical Center in Chicago and Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Having grown up in a family of pastors and preachers, I struggled with the initial call to ministry. I had not experienced any other ministry opportunities outside of local congregations. Upon discovering hospital chaplaincy, I accepted the call to ministry and made a deal with God that I would commit to leading, but only within in the confines of a prison or hospital context.

While at Wake Forest School of Divinity, I looked forward, with much anticipation to Clinical Pastoral Education. It was during the summer after my first year in Divinity School that I was blessed with the opportunity to serve as a Chaplain Intern at Illinois Masonic Medical Center in Chicago. This experience furthered my desire to work in chaplaincy. My focus became pastoral care and congregational ministry was placed further in the rear-view mirror and out of sight.

Throughout my time at Wake Forest, I served on the Worship Committee. This team of students and faculty coordinated and assisted in planning the weekly community worship for the divinity school. My experience in music ministry brought alive my liturgical knowledge and ignited an interest in congregational ministry. I, however, was

still not sold on congregational ministry and was not interested in the role of senior pastor and its responsibilities. It was not until my third year in divinity school, after accepting a Chaplain Resident position at Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, that I was intrigued by congregational ministry.

One of the University Chaplains at Wake Forest asked me to stop by her office. Upon arrival she began to ask about my post-seminary plans and suggested I apply to the Pastoral Residency program at the Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, New York. After much deliberation with myself and prayer, I decided to apply with no expectation that I would even be considered. I received an email stating that Concord Baptist was not anticipating bringing on a new resident, as they were in the process of redesigning their program. The email went on to inform me that I would be notified when the position opened. I followed through on my commitment to Carolinas Medical Center and served the patients, families, and staff of the Emergency Room, Intensive Care Units, and the Palliative Care Team.

My time at Carolinas Medical Center was difficult, not because of the work but because of the subversive racism that I experienced throughout the entire process. From experiences of nurses “mistaking” me, dressed in suit and tie, as Environmental Services to the CPE Supervisor dismissing my anger regarding the “mistake” and suggesting that I not view the experience as racist but that I, instead, sympathize with the nurse. I experienced racism from the family of a dying patient on Martin Luther King Day, as I attempted to comfort them while gathered around the bedside of their dying loved one, I attempted to pray with this family. As I reached for the hands of the two family members beside me, neither reached back, but held the hand of the person on their other side. I was

sickened that in this very tender moment, racism would still rear its ugly head. When I processed the incident with the supervisor, my feelings were yet again, dismissed and the family's refusal to hold my hand was, in their estimation, an overreaction on my part.

While I was passionate about the work with the patients and their families, it was these experiences that complicated my journey. It, therefore, did not take long for me to realize that short term ministry with hospitalized patients was not for me. I was often left wondering how patients were doing after they were released from the hospital. I wondered about the parents and spouses of those who had lost their lives in the hospital. There are some patients who keep in touch, to this very day. I decided that I wanted to do ministry that allowed me to journey with people through all of life's transitions.

The journey at Carolinas Medical Center came to an end in August 2014. I left Charlotte unsure of my next move. However, two weeks after arriving home to Chicago, I received a call from the Executive Pastor at Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, New York. She stated that they were beginning the process of interviewing for the Pastoral Residency and were inquiring to see if I was still interested. We began to communicate about the prospect and in December 2014, I spent the weekend in Brooklyn, New York, along with three other candidates and got a glimpse of life in Brooklyn and at Concord Baptist. A few weeks later, following the interview, I received a phone call welcoming me to Concord, with a start date of July 1, 2015.

At Concord, I was given the opportunity to experience full time congregational ministry and journey with people through all stages of life. It was during my two-and-a-half-year stint as Pastor in Residence that I learned what it truly meant to love the people and feed the sheep. I was given the opportunity to conduct hospital visitations and even

visit congregants who were homebound. I developed relationships with congregants across demographics. Many of the older congregants adopted me as their grandson, nephew, or son. Many of them had names that reflected that, such as “Aunt Sandy,” “Aunt Gwen” and “Mama Gloria.” The same can be said about some of the younger congregants; one who still refers to me as “Uncle Reverend T.”

While at Concord, I also experienced a series of significant losses. These losses affected me in unimaginable ways, primarily because two of them were sudden, unexpected deaths. The other was the death of my maternal grandmother. The first was the loss of a friend. He was killed in a single vehicle accident in the early hours of his twenty-eighth birthday. I was scheduled to be in North Carolina to preach and had planned on spending the weekend in Charlotte with my close friends who share the same birthday. Prior to my scheduled departure, my brother and friend called and broke the news to me. When I arrived in Greensboro later that day, I made my way to Charlotte and feelings of guilt began to surface. I felt guilty that I had allowed my friend to drive when inebriated in the past, normalizing his behavior. I felt guilty that I had jokingly said to him that “one day he was going to kill himself in a car” and did not really express my concerns for him because I feared his response.

I was also re-traumatized because of a childhood experience where my maternal aunt was killed, along with her unborn child, in a car accident when she was hit by an intoxicated driver. This was my first experience with grief, and I remember watching my family deal with this grief in unhealthy ways. What still stands out about this time in my life are the vast differences in how people expressed grief and dealt with it. I was rarely given any opportunity for one to express grief during this whole experience. I recall

arriving to my grandparents' house the morning after my aunt's death and hearing my grandmother weeping and saying, "He took her from me." In fact, my grandmother was the only person who expressed her grief audibly. My mother and all her siblings cried in silos or privately away from everyone as if their grief was unwarranted. I do not recall ever seeing any of the men in my family cry, with the exception of my Uncle Calvin, whose tears would just well up in his eyes to the sound of someone saying, "don't let 'so-and-so see' you cry." This suggested that he would trigger someone else's expression of grief. It was unsettling for an eight-year-old child because I was not sure how to express this horrible feeling, I had of never seeing my favorite auntie alive again.

A year after completing my residency at Concord Baptist, the grief I was experiencing from the loss of my friend was magnified when I lost my maternal grandmother, my biggest cheerleader and advocate. During a time in my life where my parents had in some ways turned their back on me, the one person I could rely on was my grandmother. She had developed congestive heart failure after the death of Uncle Calvin and according to her physician, this may have occurred due to what medical experts call "broken heart syndrome." My grandmother's illness occurred while I was living away from Chicago, and I had only gotten the opportunity to visit sparingly as a result. A day before I was scheduled to visit Chicago, in what I thought was my last opportunity to say my farewells to my grandmother, she passed from this life to the next.

After going home to grieve with my family and to funeralize my grandmother, I returned to New York and was tossed right back into the responsibilities of Pastor in Residence. I recall having to jump right back into my official duties on my first day back at Concord with the funeral of a congregant. I asked the pastor if it were possible to sit in

the congregation instead of the pulpit. He insisted that I serve in the pulpit, stating that the day would come when I would have to serve during my own grief. I also understood that emotional responses like crying were not allowed in the pulpit. During this funeral, I maintained my composure, as much as I could, until the final song, “Walk Around Heaven” began. It was at that moment that tears began to fall, and I was told by the associate pastor that I needed to excuse myself from the pulpit. I felt alone and not cared for in these moments and eventually found myself in a deep state of depression, unable to function as I had before. I would spend many of the following days in bed and felt a sharp decrease in the desire to do anything. I was alone and isolated from my family due to physical distance and there was little to no support around my grief amongst my colleagues at Concord. I felt that the unspoken expectation was that I would hurry up and get over it. My depression pushed toward the point to where I verbalized to a colleague that I intended to do harm to myself. I did not have a plan, but I had decided that I was too far down the hole of depression. It was at this point that my friend and colleague suggested I get the help that I needed to navigate the grief and pain I was experiencing. With the help of therapy and other interventions, I was able to pull myself out of this depressive state. However, almost a year later, I lost another maternal uncle to a massive heart attack. Again, I was devastated and spiraled into a depressive hole.

One of the valuable outcomes from this experience was my own desire to not allow others to grieve alone, as I felt I had done. I found it demoralizing that I had been at the bedside and even the graveside of so many who were in their grief and here I was so isolated and alone in my own grief. It felt like no one was at my side to help navigate this pain. It was in those moments, that I committed to being with people in their grief and

giving them the space necessary to process it in healthy ways. It has been my personal mission to walk alongside those God has entrusted to me in their lowest moments and to celebrate with them in their mountaintop experiences as well.

At the onset of the implementation of this project, I experienced another painful loss. The Sunday prior to the implementation of this project at the Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago, my beloved Mother passed away unexpectedly. I was confronted again with my family's unhealthy means of grieving. While at the hospital, just hours after my mother's last moments, my grandfather and uncle arrived at the hospital to be with us. While my brother and I had already had our moment to express our grief prior to their arrival, I specifically recall my confusion when my uncle arrived and stayed in the bathroom for over forty-five minutes. We had signed all the paperwork and had decided that since it was then 4:00 a.m. and time to go home and face the unknown. My uncle was in the bathroom and would not come out. We waited an additional thirty minutes for him to exit. It was not until months later that I realized he was in the bathroom crying. It bothered me that he felt he had to do so alone and, in the bathroom, isolated from our family. I wondered if he felt it was inappropriate for him to express his grief in our presence or if he felt it made him feel less of a man, or less of a pastor by doing so.

This experience with grief was different however, because I felt that all the previous experiences of grief were preparation for this moment. I was reminded of the Daryl Coley song, that my mom loved, "He's Preparing Me." Although grief seems to be a continuous refrain in the rhythm of life, how we manage and express our grief allows us to be better prepared in upcoming seasons of grief.

Development of Synergy

The title for this doctoral project is Good Grief: A Model for Pastoral Transition and Congregational Spiritual Health. What I intend to explore in this project is how to lead a congregation through the processing of their grief so that they can be spiritually healthy to continue the work of their ministry. Two of the sermons from the pastoral installation services at Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago were based on Joshua chapter one. These sermons, both appropriate for pastoral installation, failed to address the grief that the children of Israel expressed in Deuteronomy chapter thirty-four; therefore, failed to address the grief that the congregation has and is experiencing.

My personal ministerial development and the context converge at the point of my desire to help others process their grief in healthy ways because of my own experiences with grief and its debilitating effects. It is my belief that when a congregation is open and honest, they are better capable of doing the work that Lord has commissioned them to do. This spiritual health is imperative for the church to operate in all that God has for them.

My ministerial skills in connection with the research done for this project will aid in developing a method and strategy to assist congregations in this inevitable journey of loss of leadership and that grief experience. I believe too often congregations immediately rush to the search process to begin the next phase of the congregation's life, but they have difficulty with expressing and addressing their feelings about the loss and the impending change. As a result, congregations have been unhealthy and unable to transition with care. Unfortunately, some congregations have split as a result.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The biblical foundations chapter will consist of passages from two books of the Bible, Deuteronomy (34:8) and Joshua (1:6) which states:

So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days; then the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses came to an end. Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses. Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land— and for all the mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel (Deu. 34:8, NASB).

Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, "Moses My servant is dead; so now arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot steps, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. No one will *be able to* oppose you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not desert you nor abandon you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Survey

When perusing the text of Deuteronomy 34:8 through Joshua 1:6, the first impression expressed is a transitory elevation from Moses to Joshua. Moses has led the children of Israel for some time. Numbers 20:7-12 tell the story of Moses's disobedience when he

struck the rock. Since Moses disobeyed, God has now shown him the land that he will not enter with the children of Israel. As we look at the passage, we see that Moses is in exceptional health and still has vitality in his body. However, it is because he does not do what Yahweh says that he will now die. God does not have to look for a suitable person to make the transition smooth.

Joshua has been aiding Moses during this time. Moses laid his hands upon him to ordain him for such a time as this. God will use Joshua, in all his wisdom, to bring the children of Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua personally knew what transpired on this journey, as he had seen all the signs, wonders, and miracles God performed through Moses during the time in the wilderness. It was a natural transition as well because as Moses had followed the commands of God, so would Joshua follow the commands of God. Therefore, it made it easier for the Israelites to trust Joshua because they knew he was not leading with his own plans. Instead, Joshua is continuing to lead as God showed Moses how to lead.

As for the continuation into the Book of Joshua, chapter one features three short scenes at Israel's camp on the Plains of Moab, while the next tracks a spy mission across the Jordan. The first scene in Joshua prepares Israel for the coming invasion. The story of this chapter conveys the dramatic river crossing in which Israel finally enters the Promised Land for the first time. In previous chapters, centuries have passed since God first gave this promise to His people in Genesis 12:7. Those centuries saw the sojourning of the patriarchs, Israel's harsh slavery in Egypt, the miraculous Exodus, the covenant-making at Mount Sinai, and the wilderness wandering. Within the text, there is the scene that takes place where Yahweh commissions Joshua. Within the themes are small motifs

that help to paint a picture of the story. 1) The transfer of authority from Moses to Joshua by God, 2) the fulfillment of the promise of land, and 3) the assurance that God will support Joshua as wholeheartedly as God did Moses.

Historical Context

The Pentateuch's writings reveal the promise given to Israel, and they are close to receiving it. Through a covenant with Abraham, God told him that a great nation would come through him. This nation will come into a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 3:17). This nation dealt with real hardships in coming out of Egyptian slavery. They then were freed later in Exodus chapter fourteen by the hand of God. After their release from the Egyptians, the obstacles that presented themselves on this journey to the Promised Land overwhelmed them. Therefore, because they lacked faith, the current generation would not see the land of promise, and the new generation would be the ones to inherit it. Moses, who will not enter the land himself, addresses the new generation at the beginning of Deuteronomy. He reminds them of all the events that have brought them to this point and prepare them to be faithful to their covenant with the Lord when they cross the River Jordan and receive the 'inheritance' which he has given them.¹ When we look at the historical context of Deuteronomy 34:8, we have to understand where it fits chronologically in the context of the scriptures. Most of this text is written forty years after the children of Israel's Exodus.

It puts them in the reign of Amenhotep III. As just noted, Egypt under this powerful ruler was strangely absent from Palestine and the Transjordan, thus allowing

¹ J. Gordon McConville, "Deuteronomy," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 198.

Moses and Israel relief from any threat from that quarter.² Israel has not been given the land of Canaan entirely just yet. They are still dealing with the opposition of the Edomite, Moabite, and Ammonite people groups. The only real opposition for the children of Israel were the Canaanites, Amorites, and the people of Palestine.

The nation of Israel was in a position where they could be ready to take the land that God had promised them. They were getting ready to transition across the Jordan River in response to the will of God for them to obtain the land. It shows that God was in control as the Sovereign ruler of creation, and history was getting ready to impart on behalf of the children of Israel. The nations surrounding Palestine did not take the land because God had thwarted their plans to do so.

As the Book of Deuteronomy closes and the Book of Joshua opens, we see transitions in generations and leadership that have now happened in the nation of Israel. If the Israelites entered Canaan about 1400 BC, it was during the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550–1200 BC). The Middle Bronze Age II period (ca. 1750–1550 BC) probably was the peak of civilization throughout the ancient Near East.³ The greatest myths and epics originated in this period. Pottery was at its technical peak; and the great law code of Hammurabi was just codified. Economically, this was a time of great prosperity for Canaan, which was on the trade routes between Africa and Asia.⁴ The three greatest civilizations were: the Babylonians in Mesopotamia, the Hittites in Asia Minor, and the Egyptians. Since they all were struggling for power during this time, the more minor

² Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4 The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 25.

³ David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 45.

⁴ Howard, *Josuha*, 46.

civilizations were constantly under the authority of one of them. As it pertains to Canaan, they were not a stable nation because they had been under the subjection of the Hyksos groups from Egypt.

At the time of Israel's entry into Canaan, the two kingdoms to the north—the Hittite Empire, under Suppiluliumas, and the smaller Mitannian Empire, under Tushratta—were engaged in struggles for control.⁵ When this happened, there was a chance for Israel to come through the southern part of the land to conquer it.

Literary Context

The Book of Deuteronomy is a collection of addresses delivered by Moses to the Israelites. Scholars suggest that there is an exhortation style in which it was presented. In the early 1900s, S. R. Driver speaks to the nature and structure of Deuteronomy in the 1902 edition of his *International Critical Commentary*. He states that “the book consists chiefly of three discourses, purporting to have been delivered by Moses in the ‘Steppes’ (34:1) of Moab, setting forth the laws which the Israelites are to obey and the spirit in which they are to obey them, when they are settled in the land of promise.” These discourses he identifies as (1) the introductory discourse (1:6–4:40), (2) the exposition of the law (5:1–26:19; 27; 28), and (3) the third discourse, which serves as a supplement (29:1–30:20). The remainder of the book consists of various introductions (1:1–5; 4:44–49), conclusions (31:1–8; 32:48–34:12), and other matters, many of which appear not to be integral to the overall structure.⁶

⁵ Howard, *Joshua*, 47.

⁶ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 27.

Deuteronomy is not just a covenant text, as some scholars may believe. It is much lengthier than other documents of its kind. It is filled with many different genres: hymns, poetic materials, nonlegal passages, itineraries, and others. The genre of the book varies, but it does not negate the fact that it upholds that covenant at its core. That is the centrality of this book.

Chapter thirty-four deals with Moses's death and gives an account of what is to come at the beginning of Joshua chapter one. Moses has viewed the land of promise, which is in keeping the covenant to the patriarchal people of faith. Moses would not inherit the land because of his temper, which led him to strike the rock in the wilderness (Deu. 34:1-4). God brought forward Joshua, who had the spirit and authority that Moses had.

Now Joshua was Moses's servant or aide during the time Moses led the children of Israel. He had a first-hand experience of what exactly was transpiring with the children of Israel. An earlier generation of scholars examined the text of Joshua, intending to identify different sources. For example, the apparent conquest of the whole land (Jos. 10:43; 11:23; 21:43–45; 23:14), on the one hand, and clear statements that parts of the land were not conquered (Jos. 11:22; 13:1–7; 14:12; 15:14–17, 63; 16:10; 17:12–13, 16; 19:47; 23:5–13), on the other, suggested a contradiction. To resolve this, two or more sources were postulated: one that argued for a complete conquest of the land, and another continued into Judges chapter one, which suggested only a partial conquest. This latter source was regarded as the more historically accurate of the two.⁷

⁷ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 39.

Some scholars argue that there are discontinuities within the literary framing of the Book of Joshua. Two conflicting emphases are: 1) there were themes of complete obedience, opposed to 2) Israel's failure to obey the commands of God. The first chapter of Joshua ushered in the new leader of the Israelites, who complies with the commands of God in total obedience. He runs into some tension as the Transjordan communities need to know that he is completely obeying God in order for him to have authority. Richard Hess states:

The story of Rahab is an example of disobedience on the part of Joshua in sending the spies, and on the part of the spies in making a covenant with Rahab. Joshua 11:16–23 begins and ends with statements about Joshua's conquest of the entire land, but places between them statements about the cities that were not conquered. Chapters 13–22 begin in an orderly manner with reference to Judah's allotment but gradually disintegrate as the other tribes are described. Chapter 22 (the altar of the Transjordanian tribes) is a model of ambiguity, and the concluding chapters strive to close the book with references to items found in the opening chapters, but also describe unresolved matters. Hawk explains these contrasting plots on the basis of different strategies ('desires') that he ascribes to Joshua, God, the author and the reader.⁸

As it pertains to authorship, it is debated on whether the writings are compiled as a composite of writings to underscore the Pentateuch or whether a singular author is responsible.

When reading Joshua, the argument could be made that there was a single author because the account has many eyewitness perspectives. Also, the other consideration is that for the internal evidence. The text proves that cities are named by their Archaic names (i.e., Baalah for Kiriath Jearim and Kiriath Arba for Hebron).⁹ Since these

⁸ Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, 40.

⁹ Donald K. Campbell, *Joshua in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 325.

different factors play into the literary understanding of the text, many evangelical scholars subscribe that Joshua is the primary author with minor additions made by Eleazar, the high priest, and his son Phinehas.

The date of this book is ascribed to the time of the events that have taken place. Though scholars disagree on the date of the entry into Canaan, some believe that it was during the fifteenth century BC. Others conclude that it was in the thirteenth century BC. For the sake of discussion, we can divide this pericope up into the following sections:

- I. Narrative Epilogue (34:1-12)
 - a. The Death of Moses (34:1-8)
 - b. The Epitaph of Moses (34:9-12)
- II. Preparations for Inheriting the Land (1:1–5:15)
 - a. Instructions for Inheriting the Land (1:1-18)
 - b. God's Charge to Joshua (1:1-9)¹⁰

Detailed Analysis

The Death of Moses (v.8)

When we come to the death of Moses, we pay attention to the previous context in the former verses. We learn that Moses was one of few who was called the servant of the Lord (v. 5). In this, we find the importance of his leadership as he was leading the children of Israel. The author makes it clear that Moses' death was following succinct events throughout the Pentateuch. There is a mystery that Moses' grave was a place that was unmarked and remains a mystery to many archaeologists today. He was buried (lit.,

¹⁰ Howard, *Joshua*, 68.

"he [i.e., Yahweh] buried him) in an unmarked grave in "the valley opposite Beth Peor" (v. 6), that is, just north of Pisgah.¹¹ Some scholars suggest that it was important for Yahweh (God) to bury him in an unmarked grave so that the children of Israel would not bring his body over into the Promised Land. It shows that there was a condition put on the next generation inheriting Canaan. Moses had to remain in a particular place on the other side since he disobeyed God.

The people believed that though Moses was not going to enter Canaan, he still should be celebrated. So, they wept for him for thirty days because he was a great leader in the eyes of the people.

The Epitaph of Moses (v. 9-12)

In verse nine, Joshua, son of Nun, was found to be the Lord's one to succeed Moses. It is important to note that the spirit of wisdom was all over Joshua as he served alongside Moses. The people recognized this and were there when the formal event ushered in the wisdom Joshua obtained. When the transfer of the "laying of hands" occurs, the spirit of the Lord imparts the wisdom, or there is wisdom that one has. Since Joshua had the gift of wisdom laid upon him, it made the transition smoother for the people. They had realized that God was with Joshua as he was with Moses. The shift in leadership was more than about a transfer of power; instead, it was about the covenant authority available to Joshua. Though Moses was the instrument of the wisdom transferring to Joshua, God was the one who made sure that his covenant was carried out.

¹¹ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 453.

Following the instruction of how Joshua would come to be the next leader of the Israelites, the text raises an exciting distinction about Moses. Moses is unlike any other servant-leader in world history, let alone biblical history. He has seen God face to face as the text alludes. He walked with God uniquely in that he has seen God and has lived to share his experience. This type of relationship highlights the intimacy that Moses had with God. As Eugene Merrill states:

Whoever may have penned vv. 10–12 reflected on Moses as a prophet without compare, one whom Yahweh knew "face to face" (v. 10). This intimacy is reminiscent of the challenge to Moses' preeminence as a prophet by his sister and brother, who accused Moses of arrogating prophetic privilege only to himself (Num 12:2). Part of Yahweh's response to this challenge was that there were, indeed, other prophets (Miriam and Aaron included); but only to Moses did Yahweh speak "face to face" (Num 12:8).¹²

Looking at the concluding verse, we see that because of the mighty acts done by Moses, he has given the believers and those of the Pagan world the truth that God is the one true God. Yahweh has made it very clear to the most powerful kingdom of its time and day, that it did not have dominion over the Israelites. Therefore, if God can show his power to the dominant kingdom, he also shows the Israelites that he will continue to protect and keep them from any hurt, harm, or danger. Yahweh will display his power repeatedly so that the children of Israel will know that God is with them. Having this assurance will give them the confidence they need as they are getting ready to crossover into the land of Canaan.

God's Charge to Joshua (Joshua 1:1-6)

¹² Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 455.

The beginning of the Book of Joshua has a continuation to it from the previous Book of Deuteronomy. Several other books in the Old Testament narrative corpus also begin regarding a leading person's death using the wording found here: “and it happened, after the death of.” These include the books of Judges (Joshua's death), 2 Samuel (Saul's death), and 2 Kings (Ahab's death).¹³ We see that though a great servant-leader is now resting in his eternal peace, that the work and ministry of the children of Israel still will go on. More than that, the sovereign plans of Yahweh must continue with the changing of the garb in leadership. It is important to note that the name "Yahweh" was necessary at this time. It shows the personal relationship the Israelites had with God when he made himself known to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:11-15). Yahweh is the holiest name of God, revealing much of his character, and it is praised repeatedly throughout the Psalms.¹⁴

Joshua's original name was Hoshea until Moses changed it (Num. 13:16). His name, before it was changed, meant “salvation.” It was not until later, when he changed his name to Joshua, that it gave his name a deeper meaning. Joshua means, “Yahweh saves/delivers.” His name is rendered in the Greek traditions (LXX) as *Iēsous*, which is the same form as Jesus' name in the New Testament.¹⁵ As it pertains to his family, all we know is that Joshua's father's name is Nun. There is not any extensive information on who he was exactly. We do know from 1 Chronicles 7:20-29, about the descendants from Ephraim. In verse twenty-seven, we learn of the lineage of Joshua and his father, Nun.

¹³ Howard, *Joshua*, 71.

¹⁴ Howard, *Joshua*, 72–73.

¹⁵ Howard, *Joshua*, 73.

The last fact that we learn about Joshua in verse one is that he is Moses' servant. Since he is not called the "servant of the Lord," as Moses is, it shows a fundamental distinction of what Moses truly meant in his leadership to God.

It is not until later in the Book that Joshua is given the title "servant of the Lord (Jos. 24:29)." Joshua is Moses' aide or "one who serves." As the servant of Moses, Joshua had a firsthand experience with the different leadership challenges that Moses faced. To be the servant of Moses was an excellent task, but the servant of the Lord was infinitely greater as it pertains to a leader. This distinction makes it more relatable for the transfer of leadership between Moses and Joshua. God was sovereign over the whole transfer of power.

Verse two continues the conversation that God is having with Joshua. We find that God has made clear that He knows that the death of his servant Moses could be tragic to the people of Israel. However, Yahweh clarifies that He is the one in control regarding the crossing into Canaan. God states that He is giving the land of Canaan to the people because God is the keeper of His covenant. Moses and Joshua are merely vessels through which the plans of the Lord will come into fruition. The Lord is declaring to Joshua that the land God is giving them belongs to the children of Israel and Joshua. The generation of Israelites will benefit from God's sovereignty. Richard Hess states that for the possession of the land to take place, two things must happen: God promises the land, but the people must take it for themselves. They must fight following God's explicit direction, and their allotment of the land must follow His guidance.¹⁶

¹⁶ Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, 75.

In the following scripture (v. 3), Joshua is reassured that the land he is leading the children of Israel into is based on the promise or covenant God made to the Patriarchs of the faith. God reminds Joshua that He is preparing this place for him because of God's faithfulness. The promise was first made to Abraham in Genesis 15:18. Usually, the promise was only made to those patriarchs of the faith and no one else. So, as it is situated here in the text, God reminds Joshua that this is greater than him. God assures Joshua that he was the rightful successor to Moses by stating, "just as I spoke to Moses," (v. 3). The instructions given to Moses did not perish when Moses perished. The instructions are under the guidance of Yahweh as He leads the Israelites.

Verse four lays the geographical location of the Promised Land of Canaan in detail. The boundaries identified from Lebanon are described as the northern border. The desert was south of the land, the Euphrates to the east, and the Mediterranean to the west. The desert land to the south was known as a barren land according to Old Testament scholarship. Lebanon is referred to seventy-one times in the Bible. The great river, Euphrates, is described as the eastern boundary during this time in antiquity. It rested more on the northeast border than the actual border to the east.¹⁷

Geographically, there was the Jordan River that was the true eastern border. However, the Euphrates made a more convenient border during this time. The Mediterranean River was the great sea that was on the west, which was the land that God called for his people to rest. The land between the eastern and western extremities is called here "all the Hittite country." The term "Hittite" is used to mean different peoples in the Bible. Here, it is essentially a synonym for "Canaanites," perhaps designating all

¹⁷ Howard, *Joshua*, 43.

the hill countries west of the Jordan, although there was a tremendous Hittite kingdom to the north in roughly the period of Joshua (and preceding).¹⁸ The territory laid out for the geographic land is not meant to be an exact location of Canaan. The detailed land lay will be described later in the book as it relates to the location of each tribe.

David Hess says that verse five is the spiritual climax and highlights the first part of God's charge to Joshua. It is a heart-warming promise to Joshua himself that (1) his and the Israelites' efforts would succeed and (2) God would never leave him.¹⁹ It is encouraging for Joshua to know that the same God that was with Moses would be the same God that would be with him. The beginning of this verse is about Deuteronomy 7:24, "No one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them." God uses the exact quote that He gave Moses to show Joshua that He is with him. The instruction made gives Joshua the confidence needed to lead in a transitional time. God settles any anxiety that may have been stirring in Joshua's heart when he tells him that in the same way he was with Moses, he will also be with him. Having to lead this next generation was no easy task for anyone, let alone Joshua.

God promises Joshua he has nothing to worry about because he will not leave nor forsake Joshua (v. 6). If Joshua had questions about whether he could lead during this time, it is evident that God declares himself that is not the case. The words "I will be with you" recall identical promises made to Isaac (Gen. 26:3), Jacob (31:3), Moses (Ex. 3:12),

¹⁸ Howard, *Joshua*, 82–83.

¹⁹ Howard, *Joshua*, 83.

and Joshua himself (Deu. 31:8, 23).²⁰ If God was with the patriarchs of the faith, then surely, He would be with Joshua.

God gives Joshua specific instructions in the concluding verse of this pericope of scripture (v. 6). God is giving Joshua these instructions in the event he feels like turning away from them. He calls him to “be strong and courageous.” God will state these two other times (v. 7 and 9) in the first chapter of Joshua. Not only does this verse come with encouragement, but it comes with instructions as well. Joshua is to get the Israelites ready to enter the land that He swore to their forefathers. The consensus is to understand that God is interested in keeping the promise that He made generations ago. Throughout the scriptures, you can trace the faithfulness of God up to this point. One can determine that just because of hardships, trials, and tribulations would not stop God's covenant from coming to fruition.

The verb “to be strong” (ḥzq) is common in Hebrew (occurring almost three hundred times), but the verb “to be courageous” (ʿms) occurs only forty-one times. Both words are similar in meaning²¹ Joshua is encouraged to have “resoluteness” as he will undoubtedly deal with conflict as he leads the Israelites. Scholars suggest that the use of ‘courageous’ in verses six and nine are more similar in their meaning versus verse seven. God was merely repeating to Joshua what He already instructed to Moses.

Since we know this, we can be assured as we read this text that God is showing His unwavering character as the only one who can be trusted. There were times when Joshua solely depended on the instructions from the Lord. Obedience is an essential

²⁰ Howard, *Joshua*, 83.

²¹ Howard, *Joshua*, 84.

theme throughout the Old Testament; this shows that not only did God lead the Israelites, but He also fought for them. God had to instruct Joshua to be strong and resolute because he would be the vessel in which the Israelites would inherit the land through. If he was unwavering or weak, the Israelites could not inherit the land God had promised them.

Synthesis

This pericope of scripture from Deuteronomy 34:8-Joshua 1:6 describes the transition in leadership from Moses to Joshua. Due to Moses's disobedience out of his human weakness, God tells him that he will not inherit the Promised Land. The role of leadership will transfer to Joshua, son of Nun. The Israelites recognized that Moses was a great leader for the children of Israel. This is the only citing in the Bible that indicates there was a "servant of the Lord," like Moses. Even though Moses will not enter the Promised Land, Joshua, Moses' aide, is called up by God because of the wisdom that was in him, and Moses had laid his hands on him for a moment like this.

As Moses is laid to rest in the plain of Moab, the people mourned for him for thirty days. From that point on, God moved intentionally so that his covenant would be complete. Joshua had been with Moses as he performed all the great signs, miracles, and wonders. God gave Joshua instructions to get ready to cross the Jordan River for the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land. God promises Joshua that everywhere that his foot treads, God had already given it to him.

Yahweh reaffirms that just as he was speaking to Joshua, he had done the same to Moses. Joshua has the assurance that the instructions he had received were directly in line

with the will of God. God describes the geographical landscape to Joshua to show him the exact place where the Israelites will come. Joshua is given instruction and encouragement at the same time. God promises that no one will be able to stand against him. He also promises that he will not leave or abandon Joshua in all he and the Israelites do. Joshua must remember to be strong and resolute in his leadership. If he falters or wavers away from it, then it will directly affect whether the Israelites will enter the land since he is God's instrument. Finally, God promises the Israelites that he has given Canaan to them because he will not break his covenant to their forefathers.

Reflection

This text speaks uniquely about how one can lead well, and their tenure can be cut short. Also, it gives the reader insight into how to wisely follow leadership if there is a transfer of power that God ushers in. When reading this text, it reminds me of the life of Moses and how Moses's leadership speaks today across all areas of life, not just Christian leaders. He led the sons of Israel out of bondage, performed signs and wonders before Pharaoh, and was with them as they wandered through the wilderness for forty years. Though Moses did not enter the Promised Land, he made sure that he had someone ready and prepared to carry the mantle of leadership in case something happened to him. The Bible records that though Moses was 120 years old with much vibrance left in him, he would not get to experience the rest God had promised in the land of Canaan. He was laid to rest, and God appointed Joshua to lead the next generation into the Promised Land. Joshua was full of wisdom as he followed the lead of Moses. I am sure that he saw many of Moses's successes for God as well as his flaws. Given the nature of seeing such

miracles allowed Joshua to have a holistic understanding of leadership and how to lead the children of Israel. God continuously reminded Joshua that in the same way that he was with Moses, he would lead and instruct him.

As leaders, I believe that this text is vital in times of transition or to renew our faith in who God is to us. At times, leaders can get caught up in their role where they forget how God placed them in leadership. They can also have some anxiety about stepping into a new role of leadership that they have never experienced before. The good news is that no matter whether you need renewal or confidence to step into the role, God reminds us that He is with us always. God was not going to leave Joshua to figure it out on his own. No, he already parted his wisdom into him. It was now time for Joshua to believe that. He was groomed for the assignment, and it was now time for him to take up the mantle and go forward in faith.

That is what God calls us to do at different junctures in our lives. He calls us to move forward in faith. All of us will face obstacles and difficulties. God does not always give us a clear path to where he is calling us to go. It is what is so joyous about the journey. God calls us to trust in him and be resolute after giving us the encouragement needed to go forward. People will face loss, grief, trials, and tribulations, but the good news is that it is not in God's character to waver away from His goodness towards us. It gives Christian's strength to keep going because God is the one who goes before us to make crooked ways straight. More than that, God is depending on making his name great and reliable. That is why He keeps His promises to His people.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Roman Catholic Church carries out the papal transition with methodical precision. This pastoral transition is probably one of the most watched events in the world. While other denominations have their own traditions regarding pastoral transitions, most of what is experienced in pastoral transitions, some would argue, are derived from the Roman Catholic tradition. While the papal transition may not directly affect local congregations, there is value in the transition and for that purpose, this chapter will examine that transition.

Introduction

Pope's funeral, which will run for nine days, are planned by the Cardinals. The breaking of the Fisherman's ring and papal seal signifies the end of the papacy. No decisions may be considered final until a new pope is chosen. Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the vicar of the diocese of Rome, and the camerlengo, the primary prison, will continue in their current roles. Though the College of Cardinals has formal leadership of the Church while a new pope is being elected, their actual influence is limited.

In the days preceding up to the conclave, cardinals have private conversations. The actual voting process is held in the Sistine Chapel. Cardinals are kept apart from the rest of the world to protect their privacy and shield them from unwanted influences.

Landlines, mobile phones, radio, television, and the internet are all inaccessible. Except for three, all the current cardinal electors were proposed by Pope John Paul II. Pope Sixtus V reduced cardinals to seventy in 1586. The Pope has been chosen by the College of Cardinals since the eleventh century. Popes were originally chosen by the Roman clergy and populace.

As the church grew rich and powerful, emperors and kings began intervening in papal elections. Cardinals may rise to the positions of deacon, priest, or bishop. Since 1179, only cardinals have been permitted to vote for the pope, and this time around, twenty-three cardinals and thirty deputies cast their ballots. Those who are elected to the position of cardinal swear to maintain the ideals of the Apostolic Constitution. They also stress that they would not support attempts by secular authorities to influence the process. They may hold the first round of voting on the first day afternoon if the cardinals like. Each cardinal secretly employs a technique that hides his handwriting to print or write the name of his favorite candidate on a rectangular card that reads “Eligo in summum pontificem” (I elect as supreme pontiff). If there are more votes than voters, the surplus ballots are destroyed, and a fresh count is done. An invalid ballot is one that lists more than one candidate.¹

For the election to be valid, candidates require the support of at least two-thirds of the electorate. A cloud of white and black smoke has been released since 1903 to signify the election of a new pope. No conclave has lasted more than five days since 1831. Throughout history, there have been twenty-nine conclaves that lasted the whole month. If at the conclusion of the first day no candidate has received two-thirds of the vote,

¹ Francis A. Burkle-Young, *Papal Elections in the Age of Transition, 1878-1922* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 9-11.

voting will resume the next morning. A simple majority of the votes cast is all that is required to elect the pope. Prior to this change, a threshold of two-thirds was required, which incentivized voters to coordinate their ballots or move to a different candidate. Approximately twelve days and thirty votes would be available to change the rules if an overwhelming majority of electors backed a candidate on the first day of the conclave's first ballot. The cardinals show their respect for the new pope by kneeling before him. The throng assembled in St. Peter's Square hears the name of the newly elected pope and the results of the election. Upon his election as pope in fifteen CE, Marcellus II was the last pontiff to use his birth name.

Rationale

This is a crucial topic in life, especially in the modern world, when people have become more aware of their psychological state and how to deal with the present issues. Also, there has been a rise in mortality rates, which makes the topic crucial even for the church. Also, pursuing theology makes it relevant to understand the subject of grief because it is directly connected with how people deal with issues. For instance, during the coronavirus pandemic, it became crucial to work on people's beliefs about death and its connection to the church because they are highly connected. Therefore, having the proper knowledge of handling grief is fundamental in supporting a congregation and allowing them to deal with issues over time. This will bring more insight into the topic because it will create a view of how the church leaders handle grief, including the pope's proceedings during grief and loss.

Papal Transition

It is presently considered "Sede Vacante" since the Apostolic See is vacant. It is believed that each church that was originally established by one of the Twelve Apostles are immediately recognized as an Apostolic See by the Catholic Church. Despite the fact that the ancient dioceses of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome were all called Apostolic Sees, the title of Apostolic See was reserved for the Diocese of Rome as early as the fourth century since its bishop, the Pope, is the successor of Peter.² Because popes essentially governed as kings over broad provinces during this time, the era is commonly referred to as the "Interregnum," which means "between reigns."³

The pope is considered sede vacante after the Pope has passed away, however it is very unusual for a pope to resign. Prior to Benedict XVI, Gregory XII resigned as pope in 1415. The current sede vacante started at 8:00 p.m. Rome time (2:00 p.m. EST) on February 28, 2013, when Pope Benedict XVI resigned. When Pope Pius VI died on August 30, 1799, the sede vacante began and lasted until the March 13, 1800, election of Pope Pius VII. However, it may endure anywhere from a few days to many months. Prior to Benedict XVI's election, the papacy was vacant for a total of seventeen days. Ancient norms dictate the course of events during a sede vacante. The pope is in charge of evaluating the effectiveness of pre-existing norms and revising them as necessary.⁴

² J. N. Novoa, "The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome: A Social History of the Papal Interregnum by John Hunt, *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 48(1), 214.

³ J. N. Novoa, "The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome: A Social History of the Papal Interregnum by John Hunt, *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 48(1), 221.

⁴ Thomas J. Reese, "On Papal Transition," *America Magazine*, April 18, 2005. <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/527/article/papal-transition>.

The Apostolic Constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis* (On the Vacancy of the Apostolic See and the Election of the Roman Pontiff) was issued by Pope John Paul II in 1996 to regulate the interim period. Pope John Paul II, in making this proclamation, did more than just restate Church canon law; he also addressed the specific difficulties confronting the Catholic Church during his reign. On February 22, 2013, Pope Benedict XVI released the Apostolic Letter *Normas Nonnullas* to provide direction on how to apply specific revisions to the rules contained in *Universi Dominici Gregis*.⁵

What Happens When the Pope Dies?

John Paul II's 1996 constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis* outlines the procedures to be followed during an interregnum and the subsequent election of a new pope. A death certificate for the pope is drawn up by the secretary of the Apostolic Camera and verified by the papal master of ceremonies, the cleric prelates of the Apostolic Camera, and the camerlengo or chamberlain of the papal household. According to Cardinal Eduardo Martinez Somalo, the camerlengo, The Pope's private rooms are locked and secured by the camerlengo. Whether by his staff, the cardinals, or the general populace of Rome, the papal home was frequently plundered in the past. Theft of a pope's private papers is now the greatest threat he faces in the modern era. If the pope were to leave a will, the executor he selects would oversee managing his estate, which includes his private items and information.⁶

⁵ Thomas J. Reese, "On Papal Transition," *America Magazine*, April 18, 2005. <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/527/article/papal-transition>.

⁶ Thomas J. Reese, "On Papal Transition," *America Magazine*, April 18, 2005. <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/527/article/papal-transition>.

The future pope is the sole person to whom this executor will answer. The Pope's Fisherman's ring and seal are broken as a symbol of the end of his papacy and as an anti-forgery measure. An autopsy is not conducted in the event of the sudden death of the pontiff, as happened with John Paul I in 1978, after just a month in office, despite the possibility of widespread panic and misinformation. Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the Bishop of Rome, of the death of the Pope, and the Bishop of Rome then spread the news to the rest of the city. Meanwhile, the prefect of the papal household tells the College of Cardinals' dean (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger), who alerts the rest of the college, the ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, and the heads of state. While this is the correct protocol, the news media will likely be the first to inform the general public about the death of the pope.⁷

The camerlengo is responsible for locking and securing the Pope's private quarters. Historically, it was usual practice for the papal household to be ransacked by his servants, the cardinals, or the Roman population. These days, a pope's biggest worry is that someone will steal his private documents. If the pope makes a will, the person he chooses to administer his estate will be responsible for handling his personal belongings and confidential documents. This executor will only be responsible to the next pope. As a mark of the end of his reign and as a safeguard against forgeries, the Pope's Fisherman's Ring and seal are shattered.⁸

Papal Funeral

⁷ M. A. Riva and M. Belingheri, "An Aortic Calcification in the Seventeenth-Century Autopsy Report: The Sase of Cardinal Camilla Melzi," *Atherosclerosis*, 280, 199.

⁸ M. E. Hochberg, "Incapacitation, Succession, and the Papacy," *BUL Review*, 85, 601, 2005.

As it relates to the pope's successors, cardinals are responsible for planning his burial, which lasts for nine days. The funeral and burial date is decided by the College of Cardinals; however, it must take place between the fourth- and sixth-day following death, for specific circumstances, according to the apostolic constitution.⁹ Following the pope's wishes, the camerlengo is responsible for coordinating the funeral.

Transition of Power Upon Pope's Death

When the pope dies, all the cardinals and archbishops in charge of those ministries in the Roman Curia are also removed from office. This includes the secretary of state, Cardinal Angelo Sodano. Upon the death of a pope, his successor immediately assumes the duties and responsibilities of his office, but he must wait until a new pope is elected to address controversial or urgent issues. The secretaries who administer these departments, including the secretary for relations with states, continue in their posts. The College of Cardinals may delegate authority to the prefect or president who was serving in the position at the time of the pope's death if the subject cannot be delayed.¹⁰ Until a new pope is elected, every decision made will be considered temporary. The main penitentiary, the camerlengo, and Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the vicar of the diocese of Rome, will keep their positions. All the authority he possessed when serving under the pope remains with the vicar for Rome who tends to the spiritual needs of the Roman

⁹ K. P. Spicer, "The Vatican, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust: A Response to Kevin Madigan," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*, 4(1), 2009.

¹⁰ S. Watson, *Pope Francis: First Pope from the Americas* (Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 2013), 23.

Catholic Church. Since the Holy See has exclusive jurisdiction over questions of confession, the chief penitentiary is entitled to continue his work.¹¹

During the interregnum, Cardinal Eduardo Martinez Somalo serves as the camerlengo. When the Pope is not in Rome, the Camerlengo has specific powers and responsibilities. Upon the death of the pope, the camerlengo becomes the acting head of the Holy See and, with the support of three cardinal assistants selected at random from among those cardinals under eighty, assumes responsibility for the management of the Holy See's property and finances. While a new pope is being chosen, he is responsible for reporting to the College of Cardinals. The conclave is also organized by him.¹²

Until a new pope is chosen, the Church is technically under the control of the College of Cardinals, but their authority is restricted. No binding decisions may be made, the norms for electing the pope cannot be altered, and no cardinals can be appointed.¹³ Up to the start of the conclave, the cardinals hold a daily general congregation led by the dean of the college. Even though cardinals above the age of eighty are not required to attend the general assembly, all of them do so. Lesser matters can be handled by a commission led by the camerlengo and consisting of three cardinals.¹⁴

Conclave

¹¹ E. Torner, *The Death of Pope John Paul I: A Reappraisal* (Mankato, MN: Minnesota State University, 2020), 12.

¹² Torner, *The Death of Pope John Paul I*, 19.

¹³ Watson, *Pope Francis*, 6.

¹⁴ L. Nussdorfer, "The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 173-189, 1987.

There are various methods of electing popes throughout history. In looking back into the Church's history, we can see that up until the fourth century, the selection of a pope followed the same procedure as the selection of any bishop at the time. The papal election back then included local bishops, Roman clergy, and laypeople. Nobility and emperors had say over elections from the fourth through the eleventh centuries. Still, the support of the rest of the clergy and laity was sought, even after Pope Nicholas II issued a decree called *In nomine domini* in 1059, which stated that only Cardinal Bishops would assemble in Rome to consider candidates for the pope, who would preferably be selected from the Roman clergy. In 1139, during the Second Lateran Council, it was decided that only Cardinals would have the right to vote for the Pope.¹⁵

A two-thirds majority vote was required to elect the pope beginning with Pope Alexander III's order at the Third Lateran Council in 1179. However, this council did not provide any directives on the risk of failing to achieve this majority. The *Sede Vacante* lasted for two years and nine months following Clement IV's death in 1268. Residents in Viterbo, where the vote was being held, were impatient with the protracted delay in producing results and bricked over the polling location. The Cardinals were isolated from the world and fed by courier.

The electors were left out in the open when the people dismantled the roof of the meeting hall. This issue was discussed in the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, and it was ordered that the cardinals meet in secret. If the Cardinals could not agree on anything within three days, their food supply would decrease and become severely limited if they

¹⁵ L. Nussdorfer, "The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 173-189, 1987.

waited another five days. Mission and Evangelization for the Archdiocese of Baltimore Six Convention Site the sequester of the Cardinal electors was the procedure after the Second Council of Lyon issued its directives in 1274, and the phrase conclave (Latin cum clave - with key) comes from this.¹⁶ In modern use, the word "Conclave" may mean either the location where the pope will be elected by the College of Cardinals or the gathering itself. The Cardinal Electors live at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, which is just next door to St. Peter's Basilica, where the Conclave is held. During the Conclave, the Camerlengo is responsible for protecting the Cardinal Electors' anonymity.¹⁷

Only the Cardinals, the Secretary of the College of Cardinals (Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri), the Master of Papal Liturgical Celebrations (Monsignor Guido Marini), two Masters of Ceremonies, two Papal Sacristans, a few priests available for confessions, and two medical doctors are permitted to stay near the Conclave by the Camerlengo and his three Assistants.¹⁸

To follow the guidelines laid down in *Universi Dominici Gregis*, the Cardinal Electors must wait fifteen days from the moment the Apostolic See became vacant before beginning the Conclave. Twenty days after the vacancy was announced, it was decreed that the Conclave would begin with the Cardinals present, regardless of whether all the electors were present. In his Apostolic Letter *Normas Nonnullas*, Pope Benedict XVI made an exception to this rule by declaring that the Conclave might begin earlier than the usual fifteen days after the vacancy was announced, provided that all of the Cardinal

¹⁶ L. Nussdorfer, "The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 173-189, 1987.

¹⁷ L. Nussdorfer, "The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 173-189, 1987.

¹⁸ L. Nussdorfer, "The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 173-189, 1987.

electors were present. Following this change, Cardinal Dean Angelo Sodano informed the Seventh General Congregation on March 8 that the Conclave may begin very soon.

During the Eighth General Congregation that took place later that afternoon on March 8th, Cardinal Dean requested that the Conclave begin the following Tuesday, on March 12th. Overall, the majority liked the idea.¹⁹

There must be complete silence and no lobbying for the papacy in the days leading up to the death of the current pope. After Pope Felix IV (526-530) directed the clergy and the Roman Senate to nominate his archdeacon Boniface as his successor, the practice of not debating papal succession while the current pope is still alive became widespread. The senate raised objections, and eventually, an edict was written that made it illegal to contemplate a future pope while the current one was still alive. Cardinals have secret discussions leading up to the conclave but continuing to publicly campaign even after the pope's death is frowned upon and likely unhelpful. A cardinal who travels frequently may do so to get to know his fellow cardinals in advance of the conclave. Cardinals have grown to know one another through participation in meetings such as synods of bishops.²⁰ Typically, cardinals discussed prospects over dinner or in small groups.

The conclave traditionally begins fifteen days following the death of the pope and takes place inside Vatican City, barring any unforeseen obstacles. The conclave must begin no later than twenty days after the death of the pope, however, it may be delayed

¹⁹ L. Nussdorfer, "The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 173-189, 1987.

²⁰ M. Pattenden, "Papal Rome in Lockdown: Proximities, Temporalities, and Emotions During the Im/mobility of the Conclave," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 24(2), 291-309, 2021.

for severe reasons by the cardinals. The precise time and date are determined by the Cardinal Council. Domus Sanctae Marthae, a Vatican home with 108 suites and twenty-three single rooms, is emptied of its typical occupants during a conclave, and the election itself takes place in the Sistine Chapel.²¹

Understanding Conclave

Before the election of Innocent IV and the installation of Gregory X, the papacy was vacant for a total of four and a half years throughout the thirteenth century. In the first example, the senate and people of Rome imprisoned the cardinals until a pope was chosen in 1243, thereby forcing the election. The citizens of Viterbo, Italy, in 1271, similarly trapped the cardinals inside, removed the roof, and fed them only bread and water. The Latin root for the term “conclave” means “with a key,” referring to the fact that the meeting place is secured by using keys. Today, the cardinals have been isolated to maintain privacy and prevent any outside influence. All electronic communication is cut off, including landlines, cell phones, radios, TVs, and the internet, before the conclave begins.²² Newspapers and mail are not allowed. Professional specialists conduct bug sweeps in all the rooms. It remains to be seen if this will be enough to prevent advanced forms of eavesdropping.

Members of the Conclave

²¹ M. Pattenden, “Papal Rome in Lockdown: Proximities, Temporalities, and Emotions During the Im/mobility of the Conclave,” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 24(2), 291-309, 2021.

²² J. Peltier, “Conclaves in the Modern Papacy: Factors That Influence the Elections of Popes (1846-Present),” *Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal*, 6(1), 7. 2019.

When a pope dies, all cardinals under the age of eighty have the right to vote for his successor unless they have been canonically deposed or have abandoned the cardinalate with the pope's consent. A cardinal may attend even if he has been excommunicated. Once an elector has entered the conclave, he or she may not leave unless excused for serious sickness or other grounds by majority of the cardinals. The secretary of the college of cardinals, the master of papal liturgical celebrations, two masters of ceremonies, two religious' connections to the papal sacristy, and an assistant appointed by the cardinal dean are also allowed inside the conclave to care for any sick or injured cardinals. A sufficient number of people for cooking, serving, and cleaning the home are authorized as well. If they discover anything about the papal election, they must promise eternal silence.²³

Cardinal Electors

There are 117 cardinal electors at the moment, all but three of whom were nominated by Pope John Paul II. Electors, on average, are approximately seventy-two years old. The majority, or around 48.6%, are Europeans; specifically, 17.1% are from Italy; 22.2% are from the rest of Western Europe; and 10.3% are from Eastern Europe. Some 37.3% are really from the Third World. Oceania makes up 1.7% of the world's population, while Asia and Africa each provide 9.4%. Canada has 2.6%, the United States 9.4%, and Mexico 1.9%. About 23.9% of electors are curial cardinals.²⁴ In 1586,

²³ M. Kwiek, "Conclave," *European Economic Review*, 70, 258-275, 2014.

²⁴ J. Peltier, "Conclaves in the Modern Papacy: Factors That Influence the Elections of Popes (1846-Present)," *Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal*, 6(1), 7. 2019.

Pope Sixtus V established a cap of seventy cardinals (Francis, 2021). As a result of John XXIII's refusal to enforce this cap, the number of cardinals has increased to more than eighty. By exempting individuals above the age of eighty, Pope Paul VI increased the number of electors in the College of Cardinals from eighty-seven to 120 in 1970. In 1998, John Paul II went over by two, and in 2001 and 2003, he went over by fifteen.

How John Paul II Shifted the College of Cardinals

As a result of John Paul II, the university no longer has the same heavy emphasis on Italian culture as it formerly had. In 1978, when Pope Paul VI passed away, 23.7% of the college's students were Italian and 6.1% were from Eastern Europe (including Berlin); in 2018, 16.9% of the college's students were Italian and 10.2% were from Eastern Europe. It is also worth noting that the percentage of Latinx people is higher now than it was in 1978, at 18.6% compared to 16.7%.²⁵ The percentages of those hailing from Asia (9.3 vs. 10.5 %) and Africa (9.3 vs. 8.8 %) are quite close to one another. The percentage of Americans has decreased to 9.3 from 10.5 in 1978.

Cardinals

The College of Cardinals has been responsible for selecting the pope since the eleventh, although this was not always the case. It is possible that certain early popes, including St. Peter, appointed their successors, but this practice ultimately failed to gain traction. Like other bishops in the early church, popes were often elected by the clergy

²⁵ S. M. A. Walsh, *From Pope John Paul II to Benedict XVI: An Inside Look at the End of an Era, The Beginning of a New One, and the Future of the Church* (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, 2005), 76-81.

and people of Rome. After being chosen, the new leader received his or her priestly ordnance from bishops in neighboring communities. When the church was tiny and unified, this method of decision-making functioned well. Such differences ultimately resulted in groups fighting over who would become the pope. Christians in Rome were so divided over an election that violence erupted as early as the year 217. Both men were sent to work in the Sardinian tin mines after being deported by pagan troops who broke up their battle.²⁶ Invading crowds and hired assailants from rival groups slaughtered hundreds of people in churches around the world in the year 366. As the church became wealthy and powerful, Roman nobility, emperors, and monarchs started meddling in papal elections.

After the seventh century, only members of the Roman clergy may become the pope's electors. Similar to other dioceses, the clergy chose the bishop in this one. The guy chosen to be the pope was often a high-ranking clergy member. It was not until 891 (Formosus) that a bishop was chosen since it was thought inappropriate for a bishop to be elected outside of the diocese for which he had been initially ordained. Cardinal bishops would convene to nominate a candidate and then ask cardinal priests to vote on him, as recommended by Nicholas II (1059–1061). In a reform enacted by himself and his successors, Pope Alexander III opened the election procedure to all cardinals from the start. Except for the election that ended the Western Schism in 1417, only cardinals have been allowed to vote for the pope since 1179. Twenty-three cardinals (five from the Roman line and eighteen from the Pisa line) and thirty deputies selected by the Council of Constance voted to choose the next pope. It is well known that there are three distinct

²⁶ M. Pattenden, *The College of Cardinals: In A Companion to the Early Modern Cardinal* (Brill, UK: 2019), 23-29.

ranks among the cardinals: cardinal deacons, cardinal priests, and cardinal bishops.²⁷

Cardinal priests served as leaders of Rome's largest churches, while cardinal deacons ran the diocese's most significant organizations—what we now call charities and social services. The cardinal bishops represented the six dioceses located near the Eternal City. It was not until the eleventh century that popes started making overseas prelates into cardinals.

Cardinal electors attend Mass at St. Peter's Basilica on the morning of the conclave's opening. A mournful procession to the Sistine Chapel begins in the afternoon at the Apostolic Palace's Pauline Chapel. Cardinals take an oath to uphold the tenets of the University *Dominici Gregis* (the apostolic constitution), including the restrictions requiring confidentiality. They also affirm that they would not back efforts by secular authorities or any organization or persons who may desire to meddle in the election of the Roman Pope to influence the process. The electors conclude by taking an oath that the Pope-elect would assert and defend zealously the spiritual and temporal rights and freedoms of the Holy See and execute the *menus Petrinum* of the shepherd of the worldwide church.²⁸ A separate provision of the constitution states that the newly elected pope is not bound by any vows or commitments made before his election.

The Latin phrase "Extra Omnes" is used to ask everyone not associated with the conclave to leave once the oath has been taken. After the congregation has been dismissed, a priest or bishop chosen in advance by the college of cardinals will give a meditative address on the grave duty incumbent on them and, by extension, the need to

²⁷ F. J. Baumgartner, "Election by the College of Cardinals, 1059-1274," in *Behind Locked Doors* (Macmillan, NY: Palgrave, 2003), 19-38.

²⁸ Pattenden, "The College of Cardinals," 23-29.

act with the right intention for the good of the universal church, *solum Deum prae oculis habentes*. When he's done, he and the master of the papal liturgical ritual will exit the Sistine Chapel, leaving just the electors of the cardinals.²⁹ All debates and discussions must take place outside the church. The cardinals are free to conduct the first round of voting that afternoon of the first day if they so want. If no candidate obtains two-thirds of the vote by the end of the first day, the cardinals will reconvene the following morning to continue voting.

The Election Process

To prevent any possible instances of election fraud, including "hanging chads," the rules for the balloting process are very specific. The least senior cardinal deacon draws names for a lottery to choose three scrutineers among the electors. If any cardinals in the conclave are too unwell to go to the Sistine Chapel, he will randomly choose three more names of cardinals to collect their votes. The work of the scrutineers is then reviewed by a random selection of three individuals who are assigned the role of revisers.³⁰ New scrutineers, infirmaries, and revisers are selected at random each morning and afternoon.

Electors cast their votes on rectangular cards that read *Eligo in summum pontificem*. If you fold the ballot in half, it is just an inch broad. When casting a vote, each cardinal discreetly uses a method that conceals his handwriting to print or write the name of his preferred candidate. As they ascend the altar steps, the cardinals, one by one,

²⁹ A. Sammassimo, "The Establishment of the College of Cardinals Between the Eleventh and the Thirteenth Century," *Revisita de Investigación de la Cátedra Internacional conjunta Inocencio III*, 1(3), 79-100, 2016.

³⁰ F. A. Burkle-Young, *Papal Elections in the Age of Transition, 1878-1922* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 39.

hold their folded ballots up for everyone to see. A plate covers a container (often a big chalice) on the altar (a paten). After a brief moment of prayer, the cardinal stands and makes the following oath: "I summon as my witness Christ the Lord who will be my judgment, that my vote is given to the one who before God I consider should be chosen. The ballot is dropped upon the table. At last, he grabs the plate and deposits his vote in the slot. With the plate in place, it would be impossible for a cardinal to accidentally toss two votes into the chalice."³¹ When shaking the container to combine the votes, the first scrutineer covers it with the plate. Votes are counted by the last scrutineer before they are unfurled. If there are more votes than voters, the extra ballots are burnt, and a new count is conducted. Scrutinizers are seated at a table in front of the altar, and they begin counting the votes after they confirm that the number of ballots cast is equal to the number of electors.³²

In the counting process, one scrutineer opens the ballot, writes the name down, and then gives the ballot to another. He makes a note of the name and gives the ballot to the third scrutineer, who announces the result to the cardinals. No ballot will be counted if it contains more than one candidate's name. With a threaded needle, the last scrutineer punctures each ballot through the word "Eligo (elect)" and attaches it to the thread. After each ballot has been counted, the two ends are knotted together, and the resulting bundle is deposited into a specially prepared container. After then, the scrutineers tally up

³¹ Burkle-Young, *Papal Elections in the Age of Transition, 1878-1922*, 58-61.

³² A. Sammassimo, "The Establishment of the College of Cardinals Between the Eleventh and the Thirteenth Century," *Revisit de Invesigación de la Cátedra International conjunta Inocencio III*, 1(3), 79-100, 2016.

everyone's scores.³³ Lastly, the three revisers double-check the scrutineers' notes and the ballots to ensure accuracy. Two-thirds of the votes, based on the total number of electors present, are needed for the election. If the number of cardinals present is too large to be divided into three equal groups, then an extra vote is needed to ensure the election is legal. If another vote is not happening right away, all votes and notes are burnt, even those written by cardinals.³⁴

Scrutinizers, aided by the conclave secretary and the master of ceremonies, who use specific chemicals to turn the smoke from the votes' burning into a distinct color, burn the ballots. Since 1903, the election of a pope has been indicated by a puff of white smoke, whereas a puff of black smoke indicates an undecided vote. A document issued by the camerlengo after the election and giving the results of each session is the sole written record of the vote that is permissible and must be approved by the three cardinal assistants. The next pope receives this document, which is then archived in a sealed envelope and is inaccessible to anybody save the pope himself.

Length of the Conclave

Until a new pope is chosen, the conclave will continue. Since 1831, when a conclave lasted for fifty-four days, no assembly has met for more than five days at a time. Before the election of Innocent IV and the installation of Gregory X, the papacy was vacant for a total of four and a half years throughout the thirteenth century. Afterward,

³³ A. Sammassimo, "The Establishment of the College of Cardinals Between the Eleventh and the Thirteenth Century," *Revisit de Invesigación de la Cátedra International Conjunta Inocencio III*, 1(3), 79-100, 2016.

³⁴ Burkle-Young, *Papal Elections in the Age of Transition, 1878-1922*, 44-51.

there have been twenty-nine conclaves that lasted a full calendar month. Interregnums lasted a long time in Rome's history, and they were usually triggered by wars or civil unrest. Sometimes, setbacks occurred because cardinals liked taking control of the papacy in the pope's absence because of the perks it brought them financially and politically.³⁵ As a result of these misdeeds, laws regarding the interregnum were established, and a conclave had to be called as soon as possible.

If no candidate obtains two-thirds of the vote by the end of the first day, the cardinals will reconvene the following morning to continue voting. If that fails, they cast another vote right away. Once that happens, we may have two votes in the morning and two in the afternoon. New scrutineers, infirmaries, and revisers are selected at random each morning and afternoon. If there is a second vote, both sets of ballots are burnt together.³⁶ This means that until a pope is chosen, there will be black smoke emanating from the burner twice daily.

If the cardinals have not chosen a new pope after three days, they may take a day off from voting to reflect and pray together. During this time, the senior cardinal deacon offers a few words of spiritual encouragement. Then seven more votes are taken, and the senior cardinal priest gives an exhortation while the voting is suspended. Seven more votes are cast, followed by a pause and an admonition from the most senior cardinal-bishop. Seven more votes will be cast after this.

³⁵ J. Peltier, "Conclaves in the Modern Papacy: Factors That Influence the Elections of Popes (1846-Present)," *Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal*, 6(1), 7. 2019.

³⁶ J. Peltier, "Conclaves in the Modern Papacy: Factors That Influence the Elections of Popes (1846-Present)," *Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal*, 6(1), 7. 2019.

If after these votes no candidate has received two-thirds of the vote, the camerlengo will ask the electorate for their view on how to continue. By permitting a simple majority (more than half) of electors to forego the need for a two-thirds majority vote, John Paul II radically altered the electoral process. Therefore, the pope may be elected with a simple majority of the votes cast. Additionally, they have the option of requiring a runoff between the two candidates who garnered the most votes in the previous round of voting. In the latter scenario, a simple majority vote will suffice.

If an overwhelming majority of electors supported a candidate on the first day of the conclave's first ballot, they would have around twelve days and thirty votes to convince the other electors to amend the rules and choose their candidate. The previous two-thirds threshold encouraged voters to work together or switch to a different candidate. As a result, majorities are no longer required to give ground. To avoid upsetting the devout and the man who would eventually become pope, the minority would likely concede.³⁷

In *Universi Dominici Gregis*, John Paul II gives no justification for this shift. Maybe he was worried that the conclave might go on for too long. By providing the cardinals with more hospitable accommodations, he helped alleviate the pain that had previously prevented them from holding lengthy conclaves. It is less likely that a conclave will last for months if the cardinals may pick a pope with a simple majority.³⁸

³⁷ J. Peltier, "Conclaves in the Modern Papacy: Factors That Influence the Elections of Popes (1846-Present)," *Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal*, 6(1), 7. 2019.

³⁸ J. Peltier, "Conclaves in the Modern Papacy: Factors That Influence the Elections of Popes (1846-Present)," *Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal*, 6(1), 7. 2019.

On the other side, a conclave is more likely to stay that long if an absolute majority can pick a pope after about twelve days.

Ordination

Ordination, then he technically meets the requirements for election. He may skip the conclave if he likes. Urban VI was the last non-cardinal to be elected (1378). Gregory XVI was the last cardinal who was not a bishop to be elected pope (1831). It was not until Callistus III (Affonso Borgia, 1455) that someone who was not a priest was chosen. All the current bishops are eligible to become cardinal electors.³⁹

After the Election

“Do you accept your canonical election as supreme pontiff?” says the Cardinal Dean. At the 1271 conclave in Viterbo, St. Philip Benizi was given the pope, but he refused and hid until another candidate was selected. Similarly, one of the few canonized cardinals, St. Charles Borromeo, also declined the position of pope. When the seventy-six-year-old archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Giovanni Colombo, started getting votes during the October 1978 conclave, he made it apparent that he would not accept the pope if elected. Assuming he is already a bishop, the guy becomes pope instantly if he accepts the position. The rest is just formalities. If he is not already a bishop, the cardinal dean must appoint him as one right away; after that, he will be elevated to the position of pope. The next question is what he likes to be called. In 533, Pope John II was the first to legally alter his name. Mercury, his given name, was taken away from him since it was

³⁹ J. F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 23.

associated with an idol of ancient Roman paganism. Even though his real name was Peter, the pope who became known as John XIV in 983 did not want to be identified by his given name. He could not become Pope Peter II because of respect for the previous pope.⁴⁰

A few of non-Italian popes around the turn of the first millennium opted to adopt names that were easier to pronounce in their own countries. As early as 1009, it was standard practice for people to choose a new name. Pope Marcellus II, who was elected in the year 15, was the last to use his given name. The cardinals then bow down in submission to the new pope. After a prayer of gratitude, the new pope's name and election results are announced to the crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square by the senior cardinal deacon. The pope may then address the throng and offer his first official blessing to the city and the globe by saying "Urbi et orbi." So that they could have dinner and conversation with the cardinals, John Paul I and John Paul II pushed the conclave back to the next morning.⁴¹

Conclusion

One's emotional state typically improves from a condition of acute grief and sadness following a significant loss. The term "grieving process" describes this progression through several stages of coping. Grief can be broken down into five distinct phases, as defined by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. Anger is a masking effect, whereas denial could be seen as a coping method. It is possible to take out frustrations on others,

⁴⁰ S. Bauer, "Historiographical Transition from Renaissance to Counter-Reformation: The Case of Onofrio Panvinio (1530-1568)," in *The Historiography of Transition* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 83-98.

⁴¹ Bauer, "Historiographical Transition from Renaissance to Counter-Reformation," 83-98.

including the deceased, a former partner, or a former boss. Bargaining with God or offering God things we do not have, nor does God want, may provide some comfort to those grieving. The family can be of importance when dealing with loss and the various stages. Dr. Murray Bowen, a psychiatrist, and researcher established one of the most seminal of these methods. Since the family is a unit in which members' ability to cope with and grow together is crucial, the death of a single member will have far-reaching and lasting effects. A death certificate for the pope is drawn up by the secretary of the Apostolic Camera and verified by the papal master of ceremonies.

During the coronavirus pandemic, it became crucial to work on people's beliefs about death and its connection to the church because they are highly connected. The Pope's private rooms are locked and secured by the camerlengo. An autopsy is not conducted in the event of the sudden death of the pontiff. If the pope were to leave a will, the executor would oversee managing his private items and information. The camerlengo is responsible for securing the pope's private quarters. Cardinals are responsible for planning his funeral, which lasts for nine days. The pope's Fisherman's ring and seal are shattered as a mark of the end of his reign. Until a new pope is elected, all decisions made will be temporary. The main penitentiary, the camerlengo, and Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the vicar of the diocese of Rome, will keep their positions. While a new pope is being chosen, the Church is technically under the control of the College of Cardinals, but their authority is restricted.

Cardinals have secret discussions leading up to the conclave. The election itself takes place in the Sistine Chapel. Cardinals are isolated to maintain privacy and prevent any outside influence. All electronic communication is cut off, including landlines, cell

phones, radios, TVs, and the internet. There are 117 cardinal electors at the moment, all but three of whom were nominated by Pope John Paul II. In 1586, Pope Sixtus V established a cap of seventy cardinals. Electors, on average, are approximately seventy-two-years old. Oceania makes up 1.7% of the world's population. Canada has 2.6%, and the United States has 9.4% (not including Cardinal Husar). The College of Cardinals has been responsible for selecting the pope since the eleventh century. In the early church, popes were elected by the clergy and people of Rome.

As the church became wealthy and powerful, emperors and monarchs started meddling in papal elections. There are three ranks of cardinals: cardinal deacons, cardinal priests, and cardinal bishops. Only cardinals have been allowed to vote for the pope since 1179. Twenty-three cardinals and thirty deputies voted to choose the next pope. Cardinal electors take an oath to uphold the tenets of the apostolic constitution. They also affirm that they would not back efforts by secular authorities to influence the process. The cardinals are free to conduct the first round of voting that afternoon of the first day if they so want. Electors cast their votes on rectangular cards that read "Eligo in summum pontificem" (I elect as supreme pontiff). Each cardinal discreetly uses a method that conceals his handwriting to print or write the name of his preferred candidate. If there are more votes than voters, the extra ballots are burnt, and a new count is conducted. No ballot will be counted if it contains more than one candidate's name.

Two-thirds of the votes, based on the total number of electors present, are needed for the election. Since 1903, the election of a pope has been indicated by a puff of white smoke and black smoke. Since 1831, no conclave has lasted more than five days. There have been twenty-nine conclaves that lasted a full calendar month. If no candidate gets

two-thirds of the vote by the end of the first day, they will reconvene the following morning to continue voting. The Pope may be elected with a simple majority of the votes cast. The previous two-thirds threshold encouraged voters to work together or switch to a different candidate. If an overwhelming majority of electors supported a candidate on the first day of the conclave's first ballot, they would have around twelve days and thirty votes to amend the rules. The cardinals bow down in submission to the new pope. The new pope's name and election results are announced to the crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square. Pope Marcellus II, who was elected in the year 15, was the last to use his given name.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

God's desire for humans to confront the trials of life in intimate community is a theme throughout the Bible. In Psalm chapter thirty-four, we learn that Lord is close to those who are emotionally distraught. We can have faith that our mission as his representatives includes consoling the grieving, consider John chapter eleven's description of the burial of Lazarus. Even though it has been four days since Lazarus died, Mary and Martha are still bitter when Jesus arrives. They think their sibling would be alive if Jesus had come sooner. The sorrow they feel fills the space between themselves and Jesus Christ who, in their eyes, could have prevented the biggest catastrophe of their lives.

Instead of correcting Mary and Martha, Jesus joins them in their mourning. He shares in their suffering by being a sympathetic listener, and in doing so he helps to create a space where profound loss can be acknowledged and processed safely. He showed more of God's character by sharing in their pain when he visited them during their darkest hour. This narrative from the Gospel of John serves two purposes for support groups for the bereaved: as an example of discipleship and as a template for community service. In this text, Jesus' response invites us to care for one another by bearing witness to one another's grief and suffering rather than turning away. Christian

grief support groups are effective because they allow members to openly grieve in the company of others, a process that reveals God's nature to both believers and unbelievers.

The minister's presence is essential at this time of mourning. The minister is the go-to person in most situations. At the funeral, that person will serve as the minister. After the funeral, the minister pays a visit to the family. In Erich Lindeman words, clergy can play a crucial role in "emancipating the surviving from their bondage to the departed," helping them acclimate to a world without their lost loved one and paving the way for the development of new connections.¹

The pastor is most helpful when serving in their role as a pastor rather than trying to play amateur psychiatrist. Clergy must not abandon their cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. Their community is united through time and space by shared rituals, doctrinal beliefs, and a code of conduct. They approach and deal with issues like guilt, forgiveness, conflict, pain, and antagonism from this unique perspective. Paul Moore, Jr., Suffragan Bishop of Washington, mention that too many priests forget their priestliness when they learn some of the basic skills of counseling—or perhaps they have not been trained properly in the use of priestly techniques, and therefore are not confident in the exercise of these skills.² This was in response to the widespread use of psychotherapy as the sole form of ministry to the congregation. Many ministers wind up becoming "clinical therapists" who just happen to have "Reverend" in front of their names.

¹ Earl A. Grollman, "The Clergyman's Role in Grief Counseling – Religion Online," Religion-online.org, <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-12-the-clergymans-role-in-grief-counseling-by-earl-a-grollman/>.

² Earl A. Grollman, "The Clergyman's Role in Grief Counseling – Religion Online," Religion-online.org, <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-12-the-clergymans-role-in-grief-counseling-by-earl-a-grollman/>.

The grieving could prove beneficial, especially from clergy for they give voice and speaks for a group of worried religious believers. Clergy's actual purpose becomes clear over decades; particularly as they journey with others and are revered and respected. People come to their pastor not only in times of spiritual crisis but also for advice on their marriages, children, and other interpersonal issues. The pastor is not only a pastor, minister, and counselor, but also shows up for those in need and for others and their families in times of celebration and distress.

A pastor's job after death is not to ask leading questions but to listen compassionately and empathetically to the grieving family and determine how best to minister to them. One must express sympathy to the grieving. After a funeral, many people find that counseling sessions are more productive. There may be skepticism and extra time and effort spent on the practical aspects of the burial before the actual ceremony takes place. The funeral is a time to console the bereaved. It is a ritual of disentanglement. The nightmare is not a metaphor. Having the body there makes everything more real. Denial gives way to acceptance of the truth over time.

A religious leader's job after a funeral is to help the mourner come to terms with their loss. While doing so, the religious leader needs to watch for grief reactions that could cause mourners to fall apart or develop a mental disorder. When the grieving process is incomplete, morbid grief can set in, causing a person to react slowly and incorrectly to their loss. Clergy's strong demeanor at the funeral may mask the onset of bodily illness or agitated despair. Psychosomatic illnesses, such as hypochondria, ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, and asthma, might manifest alongside true denial of the death or schizophrenia tendencies. For example, the mourner may exhibit OCD by

compulsive cleaning to assuage their guilt or by refusing to let go of the funeral service altogether. Self-punitive actions could jeopardize their social and economic well-being.

The dividing line between normal psychological components of loss and distorted mourning reactions is extremely fine, as is the gulf between "normal" and "neurosis." Each symptom must be evaluated not in isolation but concerning the whole picture and the overall schematic descriptions. Even after a fatal illness, the family still feels responsible and blamed for most of what went wrong. Self-blame, melancholy, and aggression are all possible outcomes of feeling guilty. There is a common propensity to assign blame to an unsuitable party, such as the priest, doctor, or undertaker. The indicator may be self-accusing, but projects resentment onto others to deal with their guilt.³

The minister's influence is very potent here. Because of their feelings of powerlessness, grieving people often view the religious leader as a symbolic representation of God. Consequently, the minister can help those suffering from severe guilt by introducing them to a profound understanding of forgiveness, and they can guide them toward turning their past mistakes into a loving memorial through higher standards of conduct in the future. The French film, "Forbidden Games" portrays ritual significance in dramatic light. Both of a girl's parents were killed in an air raid. Her solace came from a never-ending game of "funeral," in which she buried every deceased pet or bird in an elaborate ceremony complete with flowers and a fancy coffin. She was able to process

³ Capretto, "Empathy and Silence in Pastoral Care for Traumatic Grief and Loss," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 54(1), 339-357. 2015.

the tragedy of her parent's deaths by reliving and understanding them via her play at burying things. By helping the dead, the little girl found comfort in herself.⁴

People of all ages can benefit from rituals that help them acknowledge and go beyond their mortality. Religious ceremonies bring people together. Only individuals who have a common religious belief system engage in them. As a result of the customs, people experience a strong sense of community and share in the group's joys, sorrows, and triumphs as a whole. Because everyone participates in the same ritual, it is set in stone and required by law. In this setting, one can be instructed precisely and clearly as to what is expected of them. Performing the religious rites may help one feel at peace with their conscience, which may represent their highest internal aspirations, and restore the love that has been lost. Some people may find comfort in traditions that others find annoying or unnecessary. They might be the antidote to the perceived indulgence at the root of the guilt; the neutralizer; the deprivation that would make up for it.⁵

Undoubtedly, the one-on-one connection between a person and a pastor is vital and fruitful. Still, there are other options to consider. Group therapy for grief is also helpful since it allows the bereaved to shed their sense of isolation and go on with their lives. More than anything, they need to be able to talk to others who understand them, their struggles, and their dreams. Loss triggers the human emotion known as grief. Loss can come in many forms and is not always associated with death. Grief can also occur after the end of a close friendship or the departure of a parent. Grief is a normal human

⁴ D. S. Jacobsen, "Preaching as the Unfinished Task of Theology: Grief, Trauma, and Early Christian Texts in Homiletical Interpretation," *Theology Today*, 70(4), 407-416. 2014.

⁵ D. S. Jacobsen, "Preaching as the Unfinished Task of Theology: Grief, Trauma, and Early Christian Texts in Homiletical Interpretation," *Theology Today*, 70(4), 407-416, 2014.

response to the death of a loved one. Healing from the loss of a loved one is also known as grief. Healing from loss is a process that occurs gradually over time. When someone close to us dies, we all feel loss, but we all grieve in various ways. Your reaction may vary depending on the nature of your relationship with the deceased and the circumstances surrounding their passing. Grief is affected by the circumstances surrounding a person's death.⁶

It is understandable to anticipate a loved one is passing if they have been ill for a long time or are very old. Some people find that knowing someone is about to die allows them time to prepare, even though it does not make it any easier to accept (and the feelings of loss will still be there). One may even experience relief at the death of a loved one who endured great pain in the final days of life. However, you might experience a feeling of how incredibly cruel it is if the deceased were a young child or teenager. Even yet, the unexpected death of a loved one, regardless of age, has the potential of being a devastating experience. Perhaps the death of someone you know was sudden, such as the consequence of an act of violence or a tragic automobile accident. The shock of a sudden loss, combined with the strong emotions it can evoke, can make it difficult to move on from experience.⁷

Resilience in the Face of Loss

⁶ P. Capretto, "Empathy and Silence in Pastoral Care for Traumatic Grief and Loss," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 54(1), 339-357, 2015.

⁷ P. Capretto, "Empathy and Silence in Pastoral Care for Traumatic Grief and Loss," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 54(1), 339-357, 2015.

Each person deals with loss uniquely since the grieving process is so intimately personal. Some seek solace in the company of others and the recollection of happier times. Many people try to distract themselves from the tragedy by keeping themselves busy. Some mourners isolate themselves from friends and family and go to great lengths to avoid anything that can trigger memories of the deceased. People react to loss in as many unique ways as they do when experiencing it. Communicating with others about one's grief might be therapeutic for some.

While some people find it easy to do so in the company of friends and family, others find it more useful to consult a trained therapist. It can be difficult to find the words to explain such a profound and personal feeling, and some people may not want to talk about it at all out of fear that doing so will just make them feel worse. If you can find other means of managing your suffering, this is acceptable. Some people may choose to express their grief by taking risks or harming themselves. To temporarily dull the grief of loss, some turn to alcohol, drugs, or self-harming behaviors like cutting. Because they are not processing their emotions, the person's sadness will last much longer.⁸

Everyday Bereavement

Edgar Jackson in *Understanding Grief*, describes a typical example of sadness as a young widow who must find a way to provide for her three children independently. A man in grief is a man who lashes out violently at the next person in a state of shock, uncertainty, and perplexity. Grief is the little old person who weeps uncontrollably at a stranger's funeral because she knows that day will come, and she has to be emotionally

⁸ J. Henderson, "A Liturgy of Grief: A Pastoral Commentary on Lamentation," *Interpretation*, 67(2), 214-215, 2013.

prepared for it. This is how one might identify the emotion of mourning. According to Galen F. Drawbaugh, ordinary grieving is a "deprivation experience." He has lost someone he cares about deeply, someone he has spent much of himself emotionally, and cannot bring themselves to let go of this person.⁹ Grief is the emotion felt when a loved one is suddenly and irrevocably removed from one's life. According to Paul Irion, a normal person's grief is a complex of emotions that can be understood psychologically as an emotion or sentiment. A person's emotional response to a death is known as grief.¹⁰

Edgar Jackson in *Understanding Grief* provides some insightful commentary in this area. Jackson argues that man grieves for his own sake, out of fear, and uncertainty. From a Christian perspective, it would be helpful to take a closer look at these factors. To begin with a man mourns for himself. Since his deceased loved one was a Christian, he has complete peace of mind knowing that Christ is now comforting his soul in heaven. Yet man is depressed because he has been cruelly separated from someone he cared for and relied on. Even if death was a relief for him, he still feels this way; to put it another way; he feels bad about himself. He feels terrible about the pain. The second reason why man weeps is that he feels afraid. Everything has changed rapidly, and he has no idea what is next. However, the fears within him due to his loved one's death is even more terrifying.¹¹

⁹ J. Henderson, "A Liturgy of Grief: A Pastoral Commentary on Lamentation," *Interpretation*, 67(2), 214-215. 2013.

¹⁰ C. C. Clark, *The Environmental Politics of Grief in the Queer Anti-Pastoral* (Doctoral Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, 2018).

¹¹ D. Lowery, "From Grief to Healing: A Pastoral Response to a Sexual Abuse Scandal in a Roman Catholic Praxis," *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Faith and Justice*, 2(2), 134-162. 2019.

Very few people regularly ponder their mortality. In our minds, it is better not to think about it or deal with it in any manner since it is a negative topic and something that constantly happens to someone else. The thoughts are pushed to the back of our minds and stays until death touches someone dear. After that, it pounces with all its might. Insecurity, which is closely related to dread, is another common reason for mourning after losing a loved one, everything ever believed in has been broken. Because of losing the sense of safety afforded by the presence of the departed, the future can seem ominous. William F. Rogers makes a powerful case that losing a loved one hurts not because we fear what has happened to the loved one, but because of the loneliness that we are enduring.¹²

It is hard to bear the suffering because there is nothing one can do to change the loss that has triggered it. To examine the typical progression of grieving, we will examine the findings of three researchers. Granger Westberg, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, and especially Erich Lindeman's work will be the focus of our analysis. According to psychologist Granger Westberg, "normal mourning" is an individual's healthy response when confronted with a profound loss. There are ten steps in this process, which Westberg compares to the ebb and flow of waves rather than the steady progression of a straight line.¹³

However, we should keep in mind that not everyone experiences all these stages, nor does everyone experience them in the sequence listed. Despite the flaws in the past,

¹² D. Lowery, "From Grief to Healing: A Pastoral Response to a Sexual Abuse Scandal in a Roman Catholic Praxis," *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Faith and Justice*, 2(2), 134-162. 2019.

¹³ A. Cho, *Pastoral Care to the Griefers in Crisis* (Los Angeles, CA: Loyola Marymount University, 2021), 21.

one must admit that the future may not be so horrible. A strong spur to improvement follows. Living with the loss entails acknowledging it but no longer being troubled by it; this is the tenet of health adjustment, which leads to the emergence of new patterns of behavior following the distancing of the image of the past. Those who can do their “grief work” and recover from a loss are better people for it. Once the despair in grief stage has been completed, and the underlying emotions and problems have been acknowledged, communicated, and resolved, the push toward recovery can begin. Because it is impossible to force someone to move through the stages of grief, the therapist’s role is to monitor the client’s progress and ensure that they do not become stuck at any given point.

Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identifies five stages in the grieving process. Shock causes denial; don’t buy into it. Second, anger involves strong feelings.¹⁴ Negotiation entails giving something up for something else, wanting to postpone the inevitable. The whole gravity of the situation dawns on us gradually. Depression is characterized by feelings of hopelessness, despair, and melancholy. The fifth sign of acceptance is a rise in independence and social activity. Erich Lindeman’s work has been the foundation for nearly all subsequent discussions on loss and mourning. Those experiencing typical, acute grieving, as described by Lindeman, present a very consistent image. Those experiencing this syndrome share intense subjective distress often described as tension or mental pain. Other symptoms include a feeling of tightness in the throat, choking with shortness of breath, the need to sigh, an empty feeling in the abdomen, a lack of muscular

¹⁴ L. J. Danbolt, H. Zock, A. Austad, A. H. Grunt, and H. Stifoss-Hanssen, “Existential Care in a Modern Society: Pastoral Care Consultations in Local Communities in Norway,” *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 25(1), 20-39, 2021.

power, and a lack of energy. The person soon realizes that triggers like visits, talking about the deceased, and receiving condolences can bring these waves of discomfort.¹⁵

The individual takes all precautions possible to prevent contracting the condition. Lindeman makes the case that acute mourning may also involve an obsession with the deceased's likeness. Most people report feeling emotionally distant from others and experiencing a minor sensation of unreality. Guilt is a common and powerful emotion experienced by the bereaved. People who have lost someone often look back on the years leading up to their death, hoping to find some sign that they did anything wrong. They may constantly criticize themselves for imagined oversight and lapses in attention. Relatedly, Edgar Jackson says that the suffering individual may spend much time idealizing the deceased because doing so is likely the simplest and best manner of addressing the numbness that ensues after a death.¹⁶ Whether guilt stems from real events or imaginings, as William Rogers suggests, it can profoundly affect life. Guilt stems, at least in part, from the inherent ambiguity of all human relationships.¹⁷ However, Paul Irion argues that cultural expectations placed on the bereaved may also contribute to the development of guilt.¹⁸

In addition, when friends and relatives make an extra effort to keep up pleasant contact, Lindeman claims that there is often a disturbing lack of warmth toward other

¹⁵ G. Goben, *Healing Ground: The Church as Compassionate Community Through the Healing Process of Grief* (Fullerton, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary Press, 2019), 52-55.

¹⁶ D. Lowery, "From Grief to Healing: A Pastoral Response to a Sexual Abuse Scandal in a Roman Catholic Praxis," *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Faith and Justice*, 2(2), 134-162. 2019.

¹⁷ D. Lowery, "From Grief to Healing: A Pastoral Response to a Sexual Abuse Scandal in a Roman Catholic Praxis," *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Faith and Justice*, 2(2), 134-162. 2019.

¹⁸ D. Lowery, "From Grief to Healing: A Pastoral Response to a Sexual Abuse Scandal in a Roman Catholic Praxis," *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Faith and Justice*, 2(2), 134-162. 2019.

people, a tendency to respond with impatience and anger, and a wish not to be bothered by others. According to Lindeman, a grieving person's daily routine undergoes profound alterations. There is agitation, an unwillingness to sit still, wandering aimlessly, and a persistent need to fill one's time. Meanwhile, there is not enough juice to go on any kind of routine or keep going for a long time. Although the bereaved clings to their daily pattern of prescribed activities, they may be astonished to learn just how much of that, routine had some meaningful connection to the deceased before the loss and has lost its meaning since.¹⁹

Most noticeably absent are the ingrained patterns of social interaction. Because of this, the bereaved become extremely reliant on any person who can inspire them to act after their loss. To what extent a person accomplishes their grief labor appears to determine how long their grief reaction lasts, as suggested by Lindeman. These include breaking free of the deceased's hold, learning to live in a world without them, and making new friends. C. Charles Bachmann outlines ten crucial steps a grieving person should take in his book, *Ministering to the Grief Sufferer*. Bachman emphasizes the importance of talking about feelings. It is crucial to admit pain, feel it deeply in one's bones, and speak about it openly and honestly in front of a sympathetic listener. The person is headed for problems if they cannot freely express themselves and have their hurts acknowledged. That is why it is so crucial for the grieving person to let their emotions out.²⁰

¹⁹ M. O'Neill, *Proactive Pastoral Care: Nurturing Happy, Healthy and Successful Learners* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 103-110.

²⁰ Goben, *Healing Ground*, 41.

One should not avoid discussing or contemplating the realities of life and death, including one's mortality and the mortality of others. Every time a close relative passes away, these truths become too apparent. It is not the facts that are challenging to accept but rather the rigidity with which they stand. Understanding and accepting suffering is necessary. Acceptance need not be made instantly. According to experts, it often takes between three and a half months and six months for people to come to terms with the reality of a loss. Acceptance of the present moment is essential for the grieving individual to find peace with his loss. The importance of incorporating loss acceptance into daily life. One should not rush back into being themselves, reintegrating into groups, picking up old responsibilities, or taking on new ones. There is no way to know how long it will take to grieve a loss before it happens fully. This is entirely up to the person involved.

Some people, especially with supportive social networks like their families, can recover more quickly. Support from ethnic, social, or cultural groups can soften the pain without trivializing it if the group is cohesive. One way to visualize this is as a sphere with a nucleus at its center, with the individual as the cell of civilization and the surrounding spheres representing one's immediate family, extended family, friends, professionals who can assist, and the larger society. If suitable replacements are available, the loss can be mitigated. When people stand by to aid, it is easier to deal with loss, as is the case with any kind of pain.²¹

According to Bachmann, this is an opportunity for the pastor to step in as therapist—not in the clinical, technical sense, but as the job description suggests, a healer. The pastor can be most helpful if they follow up with regular visits. They need to

²¹ Goben, *Healing Ground*, 63.

get one's emotions out verbally. The pastor's ability to listen attentively and empathize with those experiencing loss is crucial in this regard. Some of these steps are obligatory for the grieving person to take before they may begin to express their feelings verbally: a) so the pastor may learn the details of the person's life; b) so the person can practice their final moments; c) so they can reflect on their accomplishments; d) so they can learn the details of their life that are most meaningful to them; and e) so they can set the stage for their own release.²²

It is importance to consider various potential solutions. The pastor is in a unique position to see all the options through to their logical conclusion while still giving the grieving person freewill to make the final decision. The preacher did little to encourage the enthusiasm and care that was shown. The need to alter one's way of life and seek out new means of expressing one's creativity becomes apparent. The pastor may also recommend that the grieving person meet with other members of the church who have recently experienced sadness due to the death of a loved one.²³

Group support is essential: Grief Share. With the pastor's guidance, it would be very helpful if his church included those who had experienced and overcome grief following the loss of a loved one and could act as a "buffer" for others still struggling to move past their grief and into new relationships. Within a week of the tragedy, contact would be made with the grieving family. Those individuals who has dealt with similar

²² Goben, *Healing Ground*, 47.

²³ M. A. M. Sharp, "Remembering Pasts: Moving Through "Not Here" Resistances," in *Creating Resistances: Pastoral Care in a Postcolonial World* (Boston, MA: Brill Publishers, 2019), 61-86.

circumstances in the past may provide comfort by being of support, allowing the bereaved to relate and talk about their feelings.²⁴

Grief can sometimes lead to a yearning for social connection. The community at large, as well as those people who have experienced loss, may provide the empathy and support those who are grieving so desperately need. It is important to find meaning in the roles played in life. Meaning in life can be rediscovered by accepting that one must take on new responsibilities and adopt new roles to fulfill their potential. No one can permanently hide from reality. One must start steering their ship at a turning point. Illustrating the desire to feel indispensable, Bachmann used the example of a grieving nurse whose former supervisor was looking for someone to work the graveyard shift. The nurse wanted to feel indispensable. A gentle prod was the only thing needed to get them to the hospital. The nurse rapidly rose through the ranks to become a prominent figure in the hospital's care team. Most people eventually get around to making these modifications. Getting there, though, requires work and patience.²⁵

Mourning is a universal experience from which no one is exempt. There is no formula for predicting how someone will react to losing because everyone is different. It is true; however, that certain elements influence how a person grieves. A person's reaction to sadness in the face of loss depends partly on the significance placed on life and death. This encompasses a wide range of topics, such as upbringing, formal education, and the societal influences.

²⁴ Sharp, "Remembering Pasts," 61-86.

²⁵ P. Capretto, "Empathy and Silence in Pastoral Care for Traumatic Grief and Loss," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 54(1), 339-357, 2015.

There are at least four elements that might influence a person's mourning response: the individual's personality, the social environment, the deceased's significance in the individual's life system, and the person's values. Everyone eventually feels the pain of loss. Those who make it through report a painful refining process, but few make it out unscathed. Grief is a gift from God that one could accept, not as something to be seized joyfully, but as a permanent, unwillingly received learning experience. To benefit from suffering, one must embrace it honestly and work through it with the help of community and the support of our Lord, who utilizes the pain to mature us holy and fit for God's use.²⁶

Abnormal Bereavement

Determining exactly what constitutes abnormal grieving is a challenging task. To put it simply, it is the antithesis of typical grieving. This may be oversimplifying the situation, though, because some aspects of normal sorrow are also present in abnormal grief, albeit to a far greater extent. According to Erich Lindeman, there are two main types of atypical grieving reactions: delayed reactions and distorted reactions. We shall now respond to these two possible responses.

The delayed reaction is both the most noticeable and the most common of the aberrant reactions. One may exhibit no emotion for weeks or even months if the loss occurs during a time of high stress and critical work for the patient. The fact that people in intense sorrow about a recent death may quickly, upon examination, be found

²⁶ P. Capretto, "Empathy and Silence in Pastoral Care for Traumatic Grief and Loss," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 54(1), 339-357, 2015.

concerned with grieving over a person who died many years ago was the first indicator that this delay may include years. As part of the pathology of abnormal sorrow, aberrant responses are also present. Disrupted responses are not qualitatively distinct from natural responses to loss. The primary distinction is in degree and duration.²⁷

An excessive amount of activity without melancholy, where the actions resemble those performed by the deceased can serve as a defense mechanism. The bereaved person's behavior is a defense mechanism to postpone dealing with their emotions. One can distract themselves from thinking about the tragedy by working on several projects and taking on the signs and symptoms of the decedent's final illness. For instance, if the dead suffered from heart disease and died, the grieving person may experience acute chest aches for which there is no physical reason. Conversion symptoms, like those familiar with from hysteria, may still apply to this kind of symptom creation through identification, but there is another kind of condition that unquestionably presents a medically recognized sickness.²⁸

Despite their established medical legitimacy, Lindeman names ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, and asthma psychosomatic conditions. Given the severity of the disorders that might develop as a direct result of aberrant mourning, its importance is readily apparent. At the social adjustment stage, there is often a noticeable shift in how one interacts with familiar people. The individual is impatient, has a low tolerance for interruptions, withdraws from past social activities, and worries that their lack of enthusiasm and critical outlook will alienate them from their friends. This is also typical

²⁷ Sharp, *Remembering Pasts*, 61-86.

²⁸ D. B. Dlamini, "The Process of Mourning and Remarrying for Widowers in the Swazi Culture: A Pastoral Challenge" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2020).

of the grieving process, though it lasts far less. When the separation lasts for an extended period, and unable to reconcile, it indicates unresolved sadness.

A person or people may be the target of extreme hatred. Expect some level of temporary antagonism. However, with the aberrant reaction, the individual gives in to their hate.²⁹ While it is characteristic that persons in abnormal mourning talk a good deal about their suspicions and bitter feelings, they are not likely to act against the accused as a truly paranoid person may, as Lindeman noted. Many people who have experienced a loss have exerted tremendous effort to suppress their hostile emotions, which they could view as irrational and which they believe signal a terrible shift in their personalities. This response is reminiscent of schizophrenia. Loss of established social habits is an integral part of this picture.

Even though the grieving individual wants to be active and has plenty of energy, this individual will sit about all day waiting to be primed to do something. There is an image of the person being busy, but most of their actions appear to be counterproductive to their social and economic well-being. They may discard their possessions, get into risky business deals, and ruin their reputation among friends and colleagues. This completes the image of a mourning reaction that manifests as a clinical depression characterized by tension, anxiety, insomnia, and feelings of worthlessness, bitter self-accusation, and a clear urge for punishment. These people might be suicidal and extremely dangerous to be around. There is no way to think of Lindeman's nine warped

²⁹ D. B. Dlamini, "The Process of Mourning and Remarrying for Widowers in the Swazi Culture: A Pastoral Challenge" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2020).

reactions as nine different reactions. Instead, they represent a progression from the initial signs of distortion to the complete breakdown of one's psyche.³⁰

It is important to remember that there are many potential confounding factors, so the presence of one set of symptoms does not guarantee the existence of the full series. There may be no further distortion if, for instance, the needs of the bereaved are satisfied during the first phase of the distortion. Furthermore, the earliest phases of distortion may be so muted as to go mostly ignored until something of a serious nature is unexpectedly uncovered. It is crucial to consider time while thinking about the typical or abnormal grieving process. According to most observers, the average person needs six months to a year to move through typical sorrow.

The third to sixth month after death is a pivotal time of the mourning process, during which the bereaved will be observed to begin showing healthy symptoms of appropriately handling grief or indicators of pathological grief if they have not developed earlier. Pastors should keep a close eye on their congregants at this time to look for warning signs of unhealthy conduct, such as hostility, apathy, or excessive activity, as well as a reluctance to form new relationships.³¹

The Bible and Mourning

To begin, Christians have a reassuring relationship with God, for example the Apostle Paul found his ultimate solace in God. God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

³⁰ B. McNutt, "Reconstructing Meaning After Organizational Loss: A Longitudinal Case Study of a Congregational Closure," *Psychodynamic Practice*, 1-23, 2022.

³¹ B. McNutt, "Reconstructing Meaning After Organizational Loss: A Longitudinal Case Study of a Congregational Closure," *Psychodynamic Practice*, 1-23, 2022.

the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, is praised in 2 Corinthians 1:3. As opposed to popular belief, God is not a faceless being. When we are sad or in pain, God is near us, loving and caring for us as much as we need God to. People who have recently lost a loved one are said to be bereaved. One person from whom they can never be truly separated is God, who may provide them the greatest solace. As the Bible says, nothing shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. As Christians, we take great solace in the assurance that our loved one's deaths will only be a momentary separation and that we will one day be reunited in eternity. The power to soothe others stems from God's own comfort to us. In 2 Corinthians 1:4, the apostle Paul explained this concept: We can console those who are in sorrow with the comfort with which God too comforts us. It is only after receiving comfort that we can offer it to others. Second, the Holy Spirit may make himself known through a reassuring presence. The Holy Spirit is frequently referred to as a Helper or Advocate in scripture.³²

The word "comforter" in the New Testament is a powerful term. It is more than just a nice sentiment to be understood. It is a symbol of bravery, strength, and determination. The Holy Spirit is a comfort in times of distress, a source of fortitude in the face of suffering and isolation, and inner fortitude to weather life's storms. Third, we have the church, a community of consolation. The church is the body of Christ, according to Paul. He implies that Christians are like the eyes, ears, nose, hands, and feet—part of an alive and functioning body. According to Horne, there is variety within unity and individual performance within interdependence.³³

³² G. Goben, *Healing Ground*, 27.

³³ G. Goben, *Healing Ground*, 41.

When one member is slighted, the whole body feels it. Likewise, the whole body feels its worth when a member is praised. For the church to function as Christ's body, it must include people who can relate to and accept its members.³⁴ The fourth source of solace is the Bible. People attempt to offer words of comfort, but the Bible does so much more effectively and with much more weight. For instance, when a passage like Psalm 23:4 is recited during a funeral, it can be palpable how much healing takes place.

The psalmist says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me, and Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." The statements of 1 Corinthians 15:34-53 are also highly applicable here. "Then the prophecy in the Bible will come true. The triumphant outcome swallows up death. Where is the pain of dying now? Where is your triumph, o grave?" Several significant verses in the Bible offer consolation to grieving people. God is portrayed in Psalm forty-six as a haven and mighty fortress, ever-present assistance in times of need. The poet in Psalm 121 looks to the hills for support, but that help comes from the Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. In this psalm, the Lord is pictured as providing shelter, shielding, and keeping man safe. There are also several passages in the New Testament that offer solace to grieving. Many people find comfort in John 14:1-3. Christians can find encouragement in these verses. They are urged to await Christ's return, when He will accept them to Himself and spend all eternity in blissful fellowship with Him. Paul begins talking about the difference between the inner and outer self in 2 Corinthians 4:16. Though the exterior shell may be degrading, the inner self is renewed every twenty-four

³⁴ F. Machingura, and N. Chikwanha, *The Bible and the Place of Widows in the Apostolic: The Bible and Gender Troubles in Africa* (Bamburg, Germany: University of Bamburg Press, 2019), 22, 217.

hours.³⁵ Despite the outward decline, one's inner self is more conforming to Jesus' image. The verses in Philippians 4:4-9, 13, and 19 are used to show this.

Conclusion

Loss triggers the human emotion known as grief. Grief is affected by the circumstances surrounding a person's death. Some mourners isolate themselves from friends and family to avoid memories of the deceased. Others seek solace in the company of others and the recollection of happier times. Communicating with others about one's grief might be therapeutic for some. Grief is the emotional grief felt when a loved one is suddenly and irrevocably removed from one's life. According to Paul Irion, a normal person's grief is complex emotions that can be understood psychologically. Edgar Jackson argues that man grieves for his own sake, out of fear and uncertainty. From a Christian perspective, it would be helpful to take a closer look at these factors. Man mourns for himself because he feels terrible about the pain, he caused himself.

Psychologist Granger Westberg says "normal mourning" is an individual's healthy response when confronted with a profound loss. There are ten steps in this process, which Westberg compares to the ebb and flow of the waves. Those who are able to do their "grief work" and recover from a loss are better people for it. Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identifies five stages in the grieving process. Some symptoms of grief can include tightness in the throat, choking with shortness of breath, an empty feeling in the abdomen

³⁵ Machingura and Chikwanha, *The Bible and the Place of Widows in the Apostolic*, 22, 217.

and lack of energy. Author Paul Irion argues that cultural expectations on the bereaved may contribute to guilt. A person's genuine feelings in a mourning situation may differ greatly from those assumed by others.

That guilt stems from real events and can profoundly affect your life. Bereaved becomes reliant on any person who can inspire them to act after their loss. To what extent a person accomplishes, their grief labor appears to determine how long their grief reaction lasts. It is important to incorporate loss acceptance into daily life. There is no way to know how long it will take to grieve a loss before it happens fully. Some people can recover more quickly, especially with supportive social networks like their families. Support from ethnic, social, or cultural groups can soften the pain. A pastor's ability to listen attentively and empathize with those experiencing loss is crucial. Group support is essential.

The pastor is uniquely positioned to see all options to their logical conclusion while still giving the grieving person free will. Mourning is a universal experience from which no one is exempt. There is no formula for predicting how someone will react to loss because everyone is different. Certain elements influence how a person grieves, such as personality, social environment, values, and the deceased's significance. There are two main types of atypical grieving reactions: delayed reactions and distorted reactions. Disrupted responses are not qualitatively distinct from natural responses to loss. The primary distinction is in degree and duration. According to Erich Lindeman, the following nine things are examples of distorted reactions.

Lindeman's nine warped reactions represent a progression from initial signs of distortion to the complete breakdown of one's psyche. Many people who have

experienced a loss have exerted tremendous effort to suppress their hostile emotions, which they view as irrational, and they believe signal a terrible shift in their personalities. According to most observers, the average person needs six months to a year to move through typical sorrow. The third to sixth month after death is a pivotal time for the mourning process. Pastors should keep a close eye on their congregants at this time to look for warning signs of unhealthy conduct.

Christians have a reassuring relationship with God, the Father of Jesus Christ. Paul says that the power to soothe others stems from God's comfort to us. The Holy Spirit is a comfort in times of distress and a source of inner fortitude to weather life's storms. For the church to function as Christ's body, it must include people who can relate to and accept its members. God is portrayed in Psalm forty-six as a haven and mighty fortress, ever-present assistance in times of need. First Corinthians 15:34-53 are highly applicable here. Many passages in the New Testament offer solace to grieving. Knowing and trusting in Jesus Christ as one's personal Lord and Savior is the ultimate source of solace. If we love God, we can put our faith in Him even when we do not have all the answers.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Bowen's family systems theory offers a framework for analyzing the variances as mentioned above in rehabilitation, because of deaths inside the family and people in the families. With that in mind, changes in functional importance based on the relative age of the family member who died or is dying, as people as disparities in emotional maturity, which is passed down from generation to generation, may help to provide a heightened sense of awareness and understanding to the act of aiding. To comfort the bereaved, yet assumptions about what they should be going through, the caregiver seeks to learn about the individual's familial problems that they are dealing with right now.

The caregiver will be in a better position to support the household as a result. Members need to understand the gravity of the shock wave impact to which they are subject and to recognize family dynamics about how they usually handle major loss. This framework provides an all-encompassing perspective. The caregiver may also benefit from understanding how families often react to stress in today's uncertain environment, learning to empathize with their family members and how they see their own family structure—keeping the overall picture in mind beyond the scope of a single event to include the interconnectedness of a family. As seen with this magnifying glass. It is far less difficult to move on from criticizing those who deal with stress by controlling or

avoiding it and instead focus on understanding how one actions and those of others influence one another.

This article examines two concerns based on how various families cope with death in the family by drawing on Dr. Murray Bowen's theory of family systems. The first inquiry probes whether one's reaction to a death varies depending on who has died. This research will examine how a family member's relational functional position affects the depth of their mourning reaction and the family's potential to heal after a loss, as opposed to just looking at the degree to which the death was predicted and generationally timely. Bowen's concept of a "shock wave of sorrow" across a family will be considered. The second source of mystery is the wide range in the effects and recovery times seen by various families after suffering the same sort of loss. To understand why some families can bounce back sooner than others, people shall think about Bowen's continuum of a family's degree of differentiation, or emotional maturity. Implications for counselors and caregivers will be discussed at the end of the chapter, including how an awareness of these differences from a systems perspective can shape the assistance given and how this knowledge can shape the expectations of those working in the field concerning the range of possible outcomes in the healing process.

Psychology of Grief

Grief is the emotional and physical responses people have after losing someone close to them. Grief is characterized by profound sorrow and a strong desire to reunite with the deceased. It is common knowledge that losing a loved one may be one of the most trying experiences one can have. Those who have experienced a loss are at a higher

risk for developing major mental health issues, including depression, drug misuse, and suicide. While most eventually come to terms with their loss, grieving is still a challenging phase, during which adaptation may take months or even years.¹

Psychologists may be invaluable in assisting the bereaved, the vast majority of whom will not have a DSM-IV diagnosis, to find meaning when tragedy has struck. The cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) approach may help medical professionals better understand their patients' feelings and equip them with methods to regain a sense of agency after a loss. Their thoughts and actions regarding the loss and moving forward with a new life without the departed are the primary focus of cognitive behavioral therapy.² Clients experiencing typical grieving responses may benefit from a shorter, less structured session, while those experiencing more protracted or complex sorrow can benefit from a more organized, longer-term intervention.

Understanding Loss

The loss of a loved one has different effects on different people. One's personality, the nature of the loss, and worldview all shape how a person responds to grief. The first months of mourning are often the most difficult primarily because the bereaved do not know what to anticipate. They may start to worry whether they are going insane or if what they are going through is normal.³ The psychologist's job is to help the

¹ R. Gross, *The Psychology of Grief* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2018), 29.

² Gross, *The Psychology of Grief*, 117-129.

³ N. Thompson, "Discrimination, Oppression, and Loss," in *Non-Death Loss and Grief* (New York: New York: Routledge, 2019), 50-60.

grieving person feel more in control and adjust more easily by informing them of possible reactions to the loss.

Anger, denial, and a lack of interest in plans are other essential factors in the psychological experience of mourning. In the aftermath of a death, the question of “who” passed away always arises. However, many more things are lost along with a person’s life. Some of these additional positions include the financial counselor, social director, and even the personification of future aspirations and desires. Assisting the bereaved in recognizing the specific nature of their losses is a crucial first step in working through their grief. Loss always brings about change, and the degree to which a person must adapt is usually proportional to the degree to which their life is intertwined with the deceased.⁴ It takes time and energy for the bereaved to learn to adjust to these changes since they demand the bereaved to attempt new things.

The cognitive interpretation of mourning places a premium on the idea of control. When a loved one passes away, the survivors have very little say over the last moments of their loved one’s life. When they feel particularly vulnerable and alone, their sorrow might leave them overwhelmed and unclear with little knowledge of how to manage their grief and move toward healing. One’s perspective on life and death dramatically affects the grieving process. It is often taken for granted that people will all live to a ripe old age and further taken for granted that children will outlive their parents. Many of these presumptions about life are called into question when someone dies abruptly or prematurely. The loss of a loved one, like the discovery of a terminal disease, may cause our fundamental beliefs to tremble leading to our expectations being out of touch with

⁴ Thompson, “Discrimination, Oppression, and Loss,” 50-60.

our reality.⁵ The more significant the disparity, the more difficult it may be to adjust to a loss of a loved one who has passed away. Because it challenges our ideas about life and death and how things should occur, the loss of a child is among the worst sorrows.

Prior expectations may heavily influence beliefs about future success. It is not unusual for the bereaved to make the comments, “It’s been three months, I thought I’d be better by now,” or the like. These kinds of remarks indicate the “fix-it” attitude permeating our culture. Due to a lack of patience, the expectation is that things should occur quickly. Thus, it is not surprising that many individuals, even those who are grieving, assume that they should be able to “get over” their sadness and “return to normal” as fast as they would recover from an illness. The trouble is, this interpretation of loss is flat for many.⁶ It is not possible to simply “get over” grief; instead, it is a natural and anticipated reaction to losing a loved one. It is a personal journey with plenty of difficulties.

The bereaved may benefit from having a framework for understanding their sorrow since the experience is best characterized as having a wave-like pattern, which can help them feel more in control of their emotions. Although trigger waves, often accompanied by heightened emotions, may occur at any moment, even years later, most individuals can attest that the severity and frequency of waves reduce with time. These waves can be triggered from hearing a song on the radio to seeing a stranger who looks like the deceased. Some shock waves have a known cause, such as an upcoming holiday,

⁵ G. Zwielewski and V. Sant’Ana, “Mourning Protocol Details and the Cognitive Behavior Therapy Applicability,” *Int J Soc Sci Humanit Invent*, 6, 5417-2, (2019).

⁶ C. J. Price and C. Hooven, “Interoceptive Awareness Skills for Emotion Regulation: Theory and Approach of Mindful Awareness in Body-Oriented Therapy (MABT),” *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 798, 2018.

while others have no precedent.⁷ It cannot be stressed enough that trigger waves are entirely normal and do not worsen the condition. Typically, six months after a loss, intense symptoms of grief have often subsided and no longer cause significant hindrance to function.

Stages of Grief

Denial

Overcoming this initial phase of mourning is essential. For many at this point, life seems pointless and impossible. There is no logic to life. Many cannot believe what has taken place and find themselves in a state of denial. As a result, some may lose feeling in their bodies. Some question needs and lack motivation to continue forward. Others look for ways to get through the day without too much stress. Survival is possible due to the coping mechanisms of shock and denial. Denial aids in the gradual unfolding of the sentiments of loss. Denial may, for some, be a kind of grace. For many, denial could be viewed as a natural tactic of ensuring that those grieving are never overwhelmed. One is unwittingly beginning the healing process when one acknowledges the truth of the loss and begins to ask oneself questions.⁸ While one is fortifying one's resolve, the fog of denial begins to lift but as one continues, the emotions being suppressed can often come flooding back.

⁷ G. Gatti and V. R. Azevedo, *Inhabiting Mourning* (Oxford, UK: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2020), 2020.

⁸ R. R. Want ad Y. H. Wang, "Using the Kübler-Ross Model of Grief with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): An Analysis of Manchester by the Sea," *Metathesis: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 5(1), 79-92, 2021.

Anger

Anger is an essential component of the healing process. One must learn to be willing to experience rage, even if it seems infinite. The more one allows oneself to feel it, the more it will dissolve, and then lead toward recovery. There are several more emotions beneath anger, and one will eventually discover them, but anger is the feeling most are accustomed to regulating. The reality is that fury knows no bounds. It can extend to God in addition to one's friends, family, physicians deceased loved ones, and even oneself.⁹

It is normal to feel abandoned and alone, yet people live in a culture that avoids rage. Anger is a source of strength and may provide temporary structure to the void of loss. Initially, grieving seems like being at sea, disconnected from everything. Then one becomes furious with someone, perhaps a person who did not attend the funeral, an absent person, or a person who has changed after the death of a loved one. One suddenly has a framework for one's resentment.¹⁰ It is something to cling to, and a relationship forged through fury is preferable to nothing. Typically, one may know more about concealing rage than experiencing it. The fury is only an additional indicator of the strength of one's love.

⁹ N. P. A. A. Sandra and I. R. Mutual, "The Embodiment of Kübler-Ross Model through Game Elements in GRIS and Its Impact on Player Experience," In *ICON ARCCADE 2021: The 2nd International Conference on Art, Craft, Culture and Design (ICON-ARCCADE 2021)* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Atlantis Press, 2021), 252-260.

¹⁰ S. Chavan and S. Bhattacharya, "Study of Employees' Behavior During Organizational Change: Effects of Business Theatre on Kübler-Ross Model," *Cardiometry*, (2022), 22.

Bargaining

Before a tragedy, it appears that one would do anything to save a loved one. One becomes immersed in a labyrinth of phrases and long for life to return to its previous state and for their loved ones to be restored. If only people could travel back in time and detect the tumor sooner, diagnose the sickness earlier, or prevent the accident from occurring. Often, guilt is the companion of bargaining. This lead one to find fault with themselves and what might have been done better. One may even negotiate with the suffering or even would do anything to avoid experiencing the agony of this loss.¹¹ It becomes easy to remain in the past, attempting to negotiate away the pain. People commonly believe that the phases endure for weeks or months. It can be forgotten that the phases are responses to emotions that could potentially endure for minutes or hours as we cycle better people into them. There is no designated enter and exit for each stage, nor do they cycle sequentially. One could experience one phase, another and then repeat he first stage or emotion again.

Depression

After negotiating, focus then shifts to the current moment. Empty emotions appear, and sadness pervades life deeper than could have anticipated. It appears this depressed phase will endure forever. It is essential to realize that this depression is not a symptom of a mental disorder. It is an appropriate response to a significant loss. One may shrink from existence, shrouded in profound melancholy, wondering if there is any use in continuing alone. Depression following a loss frequently can cause a perception of

¹¹ S. Chavan and S. Bhattacharya, "Study of Employees' Behavior During Organizational Change: Effects of Business Theatre on Kübler-Ross Model," *Cardiometry*, (2022), 22.

abnormality as though one is in a condition that must be cured or overcome. The first thing one should ask oneself is whether one's current position is genuinely gloomy. The loss of a loved one is a traumatic event, and depression is a normal and reasonable reaction.¹² It would not be uncommon to suffer from depression following the death of a loved one. Knowing that one loved one did not recover this time and will not return is naturally distressing when grief has set in. If sorrow is a healing process, then depression is one of the many vital processes.

Acceptance

Acceptance is sometimes misconstrued as being "fine" or "okay" with what has occurred. This is not factual. Most individuals never experience a sense of normalcy after the loss of a loved one. This stage entails embracing the fact that a loved one is no longer physically there and means one must acknowledge that this new reality is the permanent one. One learns to adapt to it and adjust to the new standard, meanwhile attempting to exist in a world without their loved one. They first oppose this new norm by attempting to retain life as it was before a loved one passed away. With time and acceptance, however, one realizes that the past cannot be preserved in its entirety. It has been irrevocably altered, and one must adjust.¹³ Responsibilities are now restructured, reassigned to others, or assumed themselves.

¹² C. A. Corr, "Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and The Five Stages Model in Selected Social Work Textbooks," *Illness, Crisis, and Loss*, 30(2), 320-332, (2022).

¹³ C. A. Corr, "Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and The Five Stages Model in Selected Social Work Textbooks," *Illness, Crisis, and Loss*, 30(2), 320-332, (2022).

Bowens Family Systems Theory

To better grasp how individuals work, family systems theory looks at the interplay between people and family members and its environment. Numerous fields have found a use for family systems theory, including psychotherapy, specifically, family therapy which uses a systems framework to address emotional, behavioral, or relational symptoms in individuals, couples, and families; as well as educational settings and community issues, such as addressing polarized disputes and facilitating difficult conversations through initiatives like the Public Conversations Project, peace studies, and nonviolence training; and other business settings.¹⁴

Their own thoughts and feelings do not so much determine a person's level of functioning as by the system(s) in which they find themselves, with all the attendant emotional pulls and pressures, boundary and hierarchy conflicts, alliances and cooperation's, loyalty conflicts, cultural norms and beliefs, double binds, and projectiles that come with that.¹⁵ Additionally, a system's pathology or health, breakdown or resilience are all affected by the presence or absence of self-correcting and self-reinforcing feedback loops. Clarifying systems theory's seminal contributions is essential for fully grasping family systems theory.

Bowens invested a great deal into studying systems, which influenced and educated early family therapy practitioners. The systemic theory has made crucial contributions to the theoretical underpinnings of family therapy, but these contributions

¹⁴ M. N. Keller, "Bowen Theory: 49A Systems Model for Family Research," in *Handbook of Bowen Family Systems Theory and Research Methods*, (Philadelphia, PA: Routledge, 2019), 49-61.

¹⁵ Keller, "Bowen Theory," 49-61.

have frequently been overlooked, underestimated, or misunderstood as the discipline has progressed. First, there must be a serious look at the central ideas of system thinking that bear the most directly on family systems and family therapy.¹⁶ Afterwards, one would go on to outline the most prominent school systems of family counseling and the most fundamental ideas and practices of family systems and therapy.

There are various real-world clinical examples and fictional cases to explain the points. While recognizing the effects on groups, most grief counseling techniques, tend to concentrate on the sufferer and their path to healing. Different conceptualizations discuss phases of normal grief, from denial to acceptance, after a profound loss. When others express or experience sorrow and loss from the perspective of the family system, one can consider the many ways in which families deal with a crisis.¹⁷ Each person's reaction to tragedy takes on a unique form—relationships between different generations.

After a loved one passes away, family members must learn to deal with more than simply the death of a loved one. The structural shift is consistent with the impact on future generations as is the case with those who came before. Two primary concerns provide a more holistic perspective on family structures by asking why inevitable deaths are grieved and eventually overcome.¹⁸ After a tragic event, some recover quickly while others continue to suffer for years or decades later.

¹⁶ R. W. Healy and L. R. Allen, "Bowen Family Systems Therapy with Transgender Minors: A Case Study," *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 48(4), 402-411, 2020.

¹⁷ R. W. Healy and L. R. Allen, "Bowen Family Systems Therapy with Transgender Minors: A Case Study," *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 48(4), 402-411, 2020.

¹⁸ R. W. Healy and L. R. Allen, "Bowen Family Systems Therapy with Transgender Minors: A Case Study," *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 48(4), 402-411, 2020.

Dr. Bowen's Systems Theory is Based Concepts

Emotional triangles consist of at least three persons who share close bonds. Having these three persons in place lays the groundwork for a two-person relationship to impact the third. The stress in one angle of the triangle may easily affect the others. Within a single triangle, patterns can even shift. To differentiate oneself, as Bowen defines the term, means to think independently while retaining social ties. This includes striking a balance between individuality and the desire for social interaction. Emotional development culminates in a distinct sense of self. A person who has trouble distinguishing between their own needs and those of others may struggle to set limits and go their own way in life.¹⁹

An emotional breakdown in a nuclear family such as conflict between spouses, dysfunction for one spouse, impairment in one or more children, and emotional distance are the four main relationship patterns where difficulties can occur in a nuclear family. The extent to which one is taught to rely on family members is an indicator of the success of the family projection process. A lack of diversification in one's attention might stunt growth.²⁰ There is a multigenerational transmission mechanism whereby one tends to reproduce families with dynamics similar to their own. To lessen family conflicts, an emotional wall is erected. Even if this may make a problem dormant for a while, according to Bowen theory, it does nothing to fix the problem. Cutting off one's emotions may prevent one from being physically harmed, but it may also leave one in a vulnerable

¹⁹ T. Savelyeva, "The Influence of Education and Family Systems on the Sustainability Values of Hong Kong University Students, *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 1-13, 2022.

²⁰ D. Papero, R. Frost, L. Havstad, and R. Noone, "Natural Systems Thinking and the Human Family," *Systems*, 6(2), 19, 2018.

position where responses vary based on similar events. It must also be noted that sibling positioning and the upbringing in relation to siblings also shapes fundamental aspects of our character.

Importance of Family Therapy

In strategic family therapy, the focus is on solving a single issue as quickly as possible. Typically, a therapist would meet with family to monitor and observe, and then the psychologist will ask questions to inquire about the issue. While learning about the problems in more detail, the therapist then examines the family organization and how this family communicates. The therapist then works with the family to establish actionable objectives for addressing the issue.²¹ To aid in the attainment of these objectives, the family is frequently assigned homework or chores to complete outside of treatment. Strategic family systems treatment is commonly practiced when treating those addicted to drugs.

Narrative treatment focuses on the tales people choose to tell concerning life and themselves. It holds that language plays an important role in the social construction and interpretation of reality. Therefore, through stories, people make sense of the world around them. A narrative therapist helps tear down the narrative one may carry about themselves, their connections, and life. These narratives guide us in creating a positive narrative. Another form of treatment that may be used to intervene with or prevent potentially antisocial conduct in at-risk adolescents is functional family systems

²¹ J. L. Lebow, "The Systemic in Couple and Family Research and Couple and Family Therapy," *Family Process*, 59(1), 3-9, 2020.

therapy.²² A therapist may consult with the family to determine what in the family dynamic may be contributing to the adolescent's problematic conduct and then attempts to implement changes, such as better communication and parenting, to mitigate the effects of the problem. In family therapy, members can feel safe talking to one another about their issues, and the lines of communication within and between families can be strengthened. In addition to helping families resolve their immediate problems, therapy equips them with the abilities they will need to deal with similar situations in the future.²³

The Impact of Grief on the Bowens Family System

Professor Murray Bowens (1913-1990) developed his theory of family networks by studying the dynamics of families with a member of the family battling schizophrenia. Repeated reactive tendencies in relationships were observed by Bowens had never been observed or recorded that tended to run in families with lots of symptoms. Bowen found that every person experiences in the context of relationships and discussed the ways families deal with danger to their cohesion using various observable patterns, including his ideas of triangles, fusion, emotional distancing, and excessive or inadequate performance. Death, he realized, is an experience all will encounter and for many, the safest response can involve avoidance of varied intensities.²⁴

²² R. Pereira, "The Mourning Family: Diagnosis and Systemic Intervention in Dysfunctional Family Grief," in *Clinical Interventions in Systemic Couple and Family Therapy* (New York, NY: Springer, Cham., 2018), 221-237.

²³ Pereira, "The Mourning Family," 221-237.

²⁴ P. Titelman and S. K. Reed, *Death and Chronic Illness in the Family* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 53.

Death is taboo of all topics. Most individuals die imprisoned in ideas they feel unable to share with others. Taking into account the ripple effect death has on the surviving members of a family, the Bowen family systems approach to grief is a family that works; a group whose members rely on one another for support and growth; hence any loss will affect every individual and the community as a whole in ways both short and long term, what he termed linked associations.²⁵ The experience of loss and grief is often seen as an individual.²⁶ Unfortunately, the mental health profession has failed to recognize the intergenerational nature of the effects of loss system.

Influencing Factors on the Mourning Process

Bowen categorized the elements that affect family members' ability to grieve into four categories. First, specifics on the nature of the death, such as if it occurred suddenly or perhaps a prolonged illness. Protective factors have a role in access to wider networks of family and friends. The more ties one has to their community and extended family, the less alone they will feel during bereavement. In this way, individuals can disperse their anxiety across several different connections.²⁷ Members of a small, close-knit family dynamics, those with people of social support, such as close friends or relatives, have a higher risk of feeling alone and helpless in the face of intense feelings since such feelings are confined to a small number of interactions. An individual member of a socially

²⁵ P. Titelman, and S. K. Reed, *Death and Chronic Illness in the Family* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 233.

²⁶ Froma Walsh, and Monica McGoldrick, "Bereavement: A Family Life Cycle Perspective," *Family Science* 4, no. 1 (October, 2013): 20-27, <https://doi/10.1080/19424620.2013.819228>.

²⁷ Keller, Bowen Theory, 49-61.

isolating family unit is more likely to experience grief and be left to deal with it alone with participants bearing disproportionate stress.

While the passing of a loved one is always tragic, not every death requires the same level of grief from those left behind. The process of adjusting to death is the same. Those who suffer from the passing away of a close relative who has played a significant role in keeping the peace at home will have a much harder time getting back on their feet than the loss of someone less necessary to maintain harmony.²⁸ Bowen claimed that the degree of maturity and cohesiveness in a family through generations has a varied emotional maturity or level of differentiation passed down from generation to generation. Distinctions in family maturity may be shown in the adaptability of families.

The Significance of Family Stability, and the Impact of the Subsequent

A caregiver may better understand the wide range of family dynamics by considering these relationship elements. These relationships aid in the adjustments to life after a death in the family. Bowen also suggests in his theory that certain losses of loved ones always come as a devastating emotional blow. In the aftermath of traumatic experiences, people may experience what is known as an emotional shock wave that occurs in any part of the family tree throughout the months and years after a traumatic event.²⁹ When a deceased family member's role in the household ceases to function, there could potentially make way for extreme difficulty in maintaining and managing.

²⁸ Keller, Bowen Theory,” 49-61.

²⁹ A. Son, “Anxiety As A Main Cause of Church Conflicts Based on Bowen Family Systems Theory,” *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 73(1), 9-18, 2019.

Signs That Manifest Themselves Years After a Person Has Passed Away

Some people grow to dominate the dependency patterns among relatives, while others play a more peripheral role holding positions crucial to the well-being of others' operations. This means that not every death is consistent with those of the family. For instance, the loss of a parent or spouse who often stepped in to support others by helping manage their issues could leave a significant hole in the social safety net. The passing of a child, particularly those who had reached adolescence, could cause an irreparable hole in the parents' marriage. Although having a child together strengthens a couple's bond, losing a child may profoundly affect a family unit. It may be that the passing of someone less crucial to the well-being of others will provide a better opportunity of a speedy recovery for all family members.³⁰ This in no way diminishes our love or sorrow for our loved ones, but in some ways lessens future implications of adjusting.

The act of suicide, for some, can be viewed a rejection of a vital role. There are those families for whom death is a people welcome release from caregiving burdens. After a family member dies, families may be able to recover and move with their lives more quickly than they did during the first phase of sorrow. The diverse ways a death impacts those left behind should always be taken into consideration.³¹ Together, as a family, when counselors have warning of an impending emotional crisis, they may be better equipped. In the case of a shockwave, they may help families prepare for the future.

³⁰ R. J. Zakarian, M. E. McDevitt-Murphy, B. W. Bellet, R. A. Niemeyer, and L. A. Burke, "Relations Among Meaning Making, PTSD, and Complicated Grief Following Homicide Loss," *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 24(3), 279-291 (2019).

³¹ R. J. Zakarian, M. E. McDevitt-Murphy, B. W. Bellet, R. A. Niemeyer, and L. A. Burke, "Relations Among Meaning Making, PTSD, and Complicated Grief Following Homicide Loss," *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 24(3), 279-291 (2019).

Development of the Family Relationally and Emotionally

Bowen's theory of the family system offers several factors in relationships as keys to family cohesiveness and closeness are two factors that contribute to the wide range of reactions to loss. Some measure of relational capacity for growth or differentiation may be drawn upon as a buffer against stress. Having a more developed support system may be a critical factor in the reason some families are better able to make a full recovery than others more rapidly than others. The loss might cause temporary difficulties in adjusting to new routines, while for others, the same loss might test the limits of their coping mechanisms. It is possible that a family would not recover and now become incapable of supporting daily life.³²

Specifically, Bowen created a scale on which families might be placed based on their degree of distinctiveness and emotional development. Differentiation is the capacity to think independently while maintaining meaningful connections to others. It is a way to explain how different people and even families may manage emotions and their awareness; strike a healthy balance between their attachment and autonomy needs; and develop their emotional intelligence and cognitive abilities. Bowen makes an interesting observation that no family has entirely distinct members, but rather, families and individuals might differ significantly in their ability to control their emotions in significant interactions.³³ Understanding that relationship anxiety may be transferred

³² R.A. Niemeyer, "Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement: Development of a Research Program," *Death Studies*, 43(2), 79-91, (2019).

³³ M. Calatrava, M. V. Martins, M. Schweer-Collins, C. Duch-Ceballos, and M. Rodríguez-González, "Differentiation of Self: A Scoping Review of Bowen Family Systems Theory's Core Construct," *Clinical Psychology Review*, 91, 102101, (2022).

from one family member to another is not in any way to blame because of the passing of time and the resulting variation in the generational strengths of each family in the face of adversity.

The degree of openness within a family indicates the degree of difference within that family. This is how people express their ideas and opinions to others. Limiting open dialogue by avoiding controversial topics is a natural inclination to keep things calm and comfortable for everyone involved.³⁴ These are areas of great sensitivity. Reactions that occur automatically, without any conscious thought or consideration, are instead prompted by a person's fear. Our inability to distinguish one from another is evident in the fact that some family seldom discusses dealing with the aftermath of a family member's disease and death.³⁵ Some may put some space between themselves and the traumatic memories to deal with them. Simply put, some make the choice to ignore the evidence.

Despite the attempts to keep going, religion can bring much peace while one is transitioning. However, religion may sometimes serve as a mechanism for avoidance. As a person who may be terminally ill, one's source of serenity can be simple and profound. Conversely, restricted in its use as a family resource, a family's emotional system may be

³⁴ Michael Kerr, "The Family Movement, Bowen Theory, and Theoretical Medicine: A View from the 21 St Century," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 40, no. 3 (September 2019): 308–18. <https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1381>.

³⁵ Michael Kerr, "The Family Movement, Bowen Theory, and Theoretical Medicine: A View from the 21 St Century," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 40, no. 3 (September 2019): 308–18. <https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1381>.

closed.³⁶ Being able to remain more receptive in the face of potential loss is a more significant test for specific family members than for others.

There are some concerns for those who work with mourning families and caregivers must consider variables that contribute to differences in family members' coping abilities. Some may be more able to appreciate one another's differences after overcoming the hardship of losing a loved one based on how they and their loved ones cope with the rehabilitation process.³⁷ When a caregiver's expectations are grounded in reality, knowing what the road to recovery may look like for various people and families, they are more equipped to join the grieving person instead than dragging them toward a predetermined goal of adjustment stages.

The purpose of a family system is to provide more open lines of communication and interaction among family members—top-notch without being compelled to take on responsibilities they may not be equipped to handle. A worker utilizing adopting a stance of nonjudgmental inquiry may help grieving individuals put their thoughts into communicating their emotions to one another. Instead of emphasizing emotional expression, which may overwhelm the coping family member's communication skills and deepen their isolation, the caregiver encourages open dialogue. Understanding the causes and responses of their emotions, assists the caregiver in recognizing the ways family members may display resilience and strength, as they vary among family members. Over time, they may be aided in seeing family structures rather than just the people who make

³⁶ C. Perez, “Using Bowen Family Systems Theory with Families,” in *Systemically Treating Autism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 95-100.

³⁷ Perez, “Using Bowen Family Systems Theory with Families,” 95-100.

them up by considering the initiative to recognize and maturely regulate their emotions is crucial.

Bowen discussed the importance of funerals and other mourning rituals in easing the suffering of a bereaved family. He emphasized the value of talking to as many individuals as possible in contrast to apprehensive withdrawal from social interaction as a coping mechanism. The goal of the exercise is to get the whole family as near to death as possible. Bowen believed funerals may serve as a venue for mending broken ties and finding peace. Individuals are more freely identified, and family can experience what their loved one meant to others. In families with distance between members, other family members showing up and being counted for can serve as a huge step to mend fences. It can be viewed as an opportunity for development. It makes it obvious to others that one has decided to be there for them.

Instead of seizing the chance to communicate with loved ones after a loss, any routines of interaction that help to ignore the dead may cause family members' unresolved connection difficulties for a very long time. Here is a synopsis of Bowen's advice on dealing with death from a family systems perspective of a close relative, as frequently as one can, go see one dying relative. Bowen suggests families should also involve youngsters, because they will not be traumatized as much by seeing death as witnessing their parents' fear.³⁸ He also argues that families should involve as many extended relatives as feasible. Open caskets allow as much interaction between the dead and living as possible, along with timely notifications to friends and family members, and obituaries.

³⁸ C. Perez, "Using Bowen Family Systems Theory with Families," in *Systemically Treating Autism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 95-100.

Conclusion

Various family members and distinct families have different processes navigating life after death, and Bowen's family systems theory can help shed light on these dynamics. Caregivers can offer more understanding and compassion to the assisting process by considering the functional relevance of the family member who has died or is dying, as well as the variances in emotional maturity that each family inherits. The supporter's goal is to understand the specific difficulties the bereaved and their loved one's face by coming alongside them during this challenging time without imposing preconceived notions about how one should feel.

By doing so, the caregiver may better support family members in understanding the shock wave impact and recognizing the family's tendencies for coping with significant distress. This overarching perspective can help the caregiver gain insight into their own family by illuminating common responses to stress in other families. The focus shifts from an individual's experience to the interconnectedness of all members of a family. By viewing things through this lens, one can go past judging those whose coping techniques for stress involve excessive control or avoidance and instead understand how each person is influenced by and influences the behaviors of the others.

A caregiver seeks to learn about the individual's familial issues they may currently be dealing with. Changes in functional importance based on the relative age of the family member who died or is dying, as people have disparities in emotional maturity, may help an employee provide a heightened sense of awareness and understanding. Grief is characterized by profound sorrow and a strong desire to reunite with the deceased.

People who have experienced a loss are at a higher risk of developing major mental health issues.

Psychologists may be invaluable in assisting the bereaved to find meaning when tragedy strikes. That caregiver's job is to help the grieving person feel more in control and adjust more quickly. Assisting the bereaved in recognizing the specific nature of their losses is a crucial first step. Loss always brings about change, and the degree to which one must adapt is proportional to the degree their life was intertwined with the deceased. Many take for granted that someone will live to see old age or that children will grow into adulthood and these presumptions about life are called into question when someone dies abruptly or prematurely.

Losing a loved one may shake one's fundamental beliefs and cause a gulf between expectations and reality. The bereaved may benefit from having a framework for understanding their sorrow. The experience is best characterized as having a wave-like pattern, which can give one a sense of being in control of their emotions. By six months after a death, normal grief's intense symptoms have often subsided. Acceptance can still be accompanied by strong feelings. It is normal to experience grief, regret, fear, uncertainty, among others. This indicates that the individual has at least started to accept reality.

Clarifying systems theory's seminal contributions is essential for fully grasping family systems theory. Grief counseling tends to focus on the individual and their path to healing. Dr. Bowen's systems theory is based on eight ideas that work together. After a loved one passes away, family members must learn to deal with more than simply the death of a person. Strategic family therapy aims to solve a single issue as quickly as

possible. Narrative treatment focuses on the tales chosen to tell concerning life and themselves. Functional family systems therapy attempts to intervene with or prevent potentially antisocial conduct in at-risk adolescents. Family therapy members can feel safe talking to one another about their issues.

In addition to helping, one resolves their immediate problems, therapy equips them with the abilities necessary to deal with similar situations in the future. Dr. Murray Bowen developed this idea of family networks by studying the dynamics of other families. The more ties one has to their community and extended family, the less alone one feels during bereavement. The death of a close relative who has played a major role in keeping the peace at home will have a much more difficult time recovering. Some dominate dependency patterns among relatives, while others play a more peripheral role. Not every death is consistent with those of the family. For some families, a death is a welcome release from caregiving burdens.

After a family member's death, family may be able to recover more quickly. Some measure of relational capacity for growth or differentiation that may be drawn upon as a buffer against stress. Having a more developed support system may be a key factor in why some families are better able to make a full recovery from adversity than others. Differentiation is the capacity to think independently while maintaining meaningful connections to others. Limiting open dialogue by avoiding controversial topics is a natural inclination to keep things calm and comfortable for everyone involved. Our inability to distinguish one another is evident in the fact that my family seldom discusses dealing with the aftermath of my mother's disease and death.

The purpose of a family system is to provide more open lines of communication and interaction among family members. Aid workers may be able to see family structures rather than just the people who make them up by considering the employee's initiative to recognize and maturely regulate their emotions is crucial. Bowen believed funerals might serve as a venue for mending broken ties and finding peace. The exercise aims to get the whole family involved in the process.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

This chapter reflects not the information gained by analyzing a problem that every church will experience. It details the final analysis of the research project, describes the process, and summarizes the field experiences and reflections. It also details the project outcomes, as well as suggestions for further research.

In June 2018, I arrived at Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago as Interim Pastor. Calvary had not only lost their pastor of forty years but had recently suffered the loss of their first interim pastor, who served for six months. In its 126th year history, at this point, there had only been two Black pastors in the congregation's history. After "white flight" of the 1970s in Chicago, the congregation transitioned from a predominately white congregation to a Black congregation.

Much of the identity of Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago was and is wrapped in the person of the pastor emeritus. Calvary is located at 2309 East 80th Street, in the South Shore neighborhood on the south side of Chicago. The current structure consists of a singular building which includes the sanctuary, fellowship hall with kitchen, and multiple classrooms on the third floor. During the final years of Dr. Butler's tenure, the membership declined greatly, both in numbers and fiscally. As a result, the ministry opportunities that existed declined as well, primarily because Dr. Butler functioned in silo, in the name of Calvary.

The research hypothesis states if relevant pastoral care is implemented at Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago, allowing the congregants space to deal with their grief over the loss of their previous pastor, then the congregation will develop a greater sense of spiritual health. The primary purpose of this project has been to help the congregation explore and process their grief around the loss of their pastor of forty years. It will also allow the congregation to tap into their resilience and look hopefully toward the future. The expectation was that this model would provide the tools to deal effectively with grief, not just in this experience but in their life's experiences. The resilience would lead the congregation to re-engage in ministry and discover a new method of engaging in ministry, where all members are actively participating. My hypothesis solves the problem of inability of congregations to move forward in the wake of pastoral transitions. With this in mind, if grief is processed in healthy ways, congregations are less likely to remain stagnant.

The research was designed to address the following objectives:

1. Gain knowledge about grief from an interdisciplinary perspective.
2. Understand the power of lament and what the Bible says about grief.
3. The actions of the participants who engage will lead to a more resilient and hopeful outlook for the congregation that will become contagious.

Focus Group Overview

Congregants were invited and engaged in a series of interdisciplinary teachings with the expectations of empowering individuals to deal with their grief in healthy ways and move the congregation from a stagnant place to a more hopeful forward-looking way.

The objective of the focus group was tested twice with comparative methods using pre- and post-surveys; once prior to the seminars and again at the completion of the six-week teaching session. Participants were expected to complete journals and wrestled with four journal responses that would connect them with the lesson for that week. In addition to the take home journal responses, our study concluded with post-survey questionnaire. The participants consisted of members and leadership from Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago.

Surveys were utilized to compare the change that occurred in the participant's thoughts around grief from the pre-survey, which was administered at the beginning of the six-week seminar. Six lessons were delivered to the group, providing tools on how to recognize and manage grief in healthy ways. The anticipated goal of this project was to hand to the participants a toolkit of coping mechanisms to rediscover the congregation's purpose and reignite the ministries of the church.

Weekly Session Overviews

At the beginning of each session together, the focus group was reminded of the value of this conversation, not just in the life of the church, but also for our individual lives. It was extremely important, having traversed my personal grief, to empower them individually to acknowledge their grief and move toward wholeness, individually and collectively. We struggle with grief primarily because we are conditioned to believe that we ought not have an outward expression of our grief or even acknowledge our grief, outside of grieving the death of a loved one. It was desired that if nothing else, the outcome would be that grief in other areas of the lives of those who participated would be

identified and they would have the knowledge and tools to move beyond their grief. Here is an overview of the series of studies that was shared with the focus group.

The first session of this focus group was intentional on helping participants take a reflective look at themselves and how they perceive themselves. One tool that was used to help us accomplish this goal was asking all participants to complete the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Participants were asked to honestly answer each question and as everyone shared their results, the majority stated that they resonated with each descriptor for each personality. Each of the sixteen personality types were discussed and those participants who fit into those types, based off their results, were given the opportunity to share how they resonated with their personality type. This tool also allowed for the participants to hear and see the basic differences in the ways we individually prefer to use our perception and judgment. It was important for the participants to realize that much of their feelings around the retirement of Pastor Emeritus was due in part to their perception and judgment. It was equally important for each participant to engage the idea of how they may be perceived in the world because a great deal of the conversation was spent with people affirming others' personality types with many owning their personality type proudly.

At the conclusion of this initial session, participants were given the opportunity to complete the pre-survey which gauged their ideas around grief, specifically how they define grief, their personal response to grief and their grief around the retirement of their former pastor. The outcome of those pre-survey questions will be shared later in this analysis. The hope was that as participants completed this six-week symposium, they

would see a shift in their definition of grief and would also be given the tools necessary to discuss their grief.

In the second session of this focus group participants were introduced to the Elisabeth Kübler-Ross model of five stages of grief. During this second session, participants were given the opportunity to engage this model for grief and discuss their movement through these stages of grief in their personal experiences and in their grief experience with the pastoral transition process. Participants were then asked to consider what stage they believed the congregation to presently reside in. While some respondents believed the congregation was resting in the acceptance stage, others contested and believed the congregation rested in the bargaining stage. When pushed further about this assertion, the respondent stated that she believed that the congregation spends quite a bit of time ruminating on the past and referencing “when Dr. Butler was here...” She also stated that the congregation spends quite a bit of time comparing themselves to other congregations. Kübler-Ross defines these actions as fitting into the behavior exhibited when in the bargaining stage of the grief process.

In this second session, participants were given the journal prompt of writing about their feelings about the departure of Pastor Emeritus. After spending some time journaling, participants were given the opportunity to express their feelings to the focus group. One of the respondents acknowledged that she was not certain her grief was solely for the transition of Pastor Emeritus. She stated that Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago and Pastor Emeritus is so intertwined for her, that her grief is probably for the idea of what she wanted her church to be rather than the individual. Being a member of Calvary

for over twenty-five years, this respondent was able to identify that her grief was for her church and the hopes that she held for the potential of her church.

The third session of this focus group focused on “Common Elements of Grief.” This session helped congregants to understand the connection of grief to our physical, mental, and emotional health. Participants were challenged to identify a biblical character and how they handled their grief. Many respondents immediately named Job as the character they most closely identified with. The respondents resonated with Job’s interaction with his friends and the ways they insisted Job was the cause of the trauma and turmoil he was experiencing. The connection was made with what led to the end of Pastor Emeritus’s tenure. Hope for the respondents were found in Job’s faith and his refusal to turn away or curse God. However, one respondent identified closely with David. The respondent stated that David appears to have grieved while his son was sick, much as the respondent had grieved when things began to deteriorate at Calvary. Like David, at the end of pastoral tenure, they were able to rise, eat, change their clothes, and continue forward with hope.

In the fourth session, “Grief and Hope,” the discussion was centered on the biblical passage of First Thessalonians 4:13. The focus group was challenged to examine the differences between grief with no hope and grief with hope. Participants were able to better understand how their collective grief was debilitating to the spiritual congregational health, just as grief can be debilitating to our physical health. From the conversation, participants were able to acknowledge that grief with hope requires a steadfast trust in God and a strong belief that all the promises of God will come to

fruition. The counter thought was that grief with no hope led to no expectations or growth.

In the fifth session, “God’s Providence and Our Finitude,” participants were introduced to the narrative of theologian, E. Frank Tupper, who makes the claim that when it comes to suffering and evil, God always does the most God can do.¹ Tupper’s struggle with how an omnipotent God, who loves us, allows for some of the things to happen that occurs in our lives. The participants were challenged to think about God’s self-limitations and wrestle with God always doing the most that God can do.

In the last installment of this focus group, participants were introduced to Murray Bowen’s family system’s theory and its relationship to grief. Participants were given the opportunity to reflect on how organizational and systems shift as parts of that system are removed. Participants were encouraged to journal about their feelings about the retirement of Pastor Emeritus. Some participants expressed feelings of abandonment and disappointment. After a lengthy discussion, many were able to relate some of the feelings and griefs experienced about Pastor Emeritus’ retirement to some past life event. The power of viewing our family systems and how they influence our responses to life’s circumstances.

Collection of Data

It was determined the best method for this study would be conducted by qualitative research. It was determined that this qualitative design was the most effective

¹ E. Frank. Tupper, *A Scandalous Providence: The Jesus Story of the Compassion of God* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2013), 203.

means. The goal was to create a focus group to obtain honest feedback as it pertained to their feelings and grief around the pastor's departure, how that grief has impacted ministry, and how to look forward with hope. Moreover, it was desired to see if the wedding of the psychological understanding of grief and the biblical foundation for hope and grief would assist the congregation in rediscovering their zeal for impactful ministry that once was a part of who Calvary Church is. These interactions would hopefully be a catalyst for spiritual growth for the church.

A pre-survey was provided to the participants to complete at the end of the initial meeting of this focus group. The pre-surveys collected basic demographic information as well as answers to relevant questions. A post-survey was administered in similar fashion at the conclusion of the last session of the focus group. Comparing and analyzing the information obtained from these surveys allowed measurement of the effectiveness and impact of the project model. In addition to the pre- and post-surveys, the volunteers also participated in focus group discussions and focused journal entries. The focus group discussions were recorded and then transcribed.

Participants

Twelve participants met to discuss the details and expectations of the focus group. At this meeting, the purpose and goals of the ministry project were outlined, as well as the long-term goals and relevance to the church. During this meeting, emphasis was made on the importance of honesty, the necessity of vulnerability, and seriousness of anonymity were emphasized. The demographic breakdown of the study population was nine participants, all were females, with ages ranging from twenty-five to seventy-six. The

makeup of the focus group reflected the age and gender dynamics present in the congregation, particularly the lack of male presence and the presence of one individual in the age category of twenty-five to forty-five.

One major finding is that all these individuals initially thought of grief as solely belonging to the death of a loved one. The first finding relates to the participant's responses to the question of how they would define grief. The participants associated the term grief to dealing with the death of a loved one. However, in the post-survey, one of the responses leaned toward grief associated with being an empty nester and the implications of how that respondent was grieving her previous role as mother and how that role is now redefined with her children no longer living in the home.

Another respondent stated that she had not previously recognized it as such but realized that her early retirement to care for her ailing mother caused some unresolved grief in her life. She stated that after her mother made her transition, she is not able to identify a period of grief. She was able to now acknowledge that her loss of job signified a loss of identity of sorts and represented a loss of identity and self-worth.

This respondent defined grief much differently in the post-survey. She acknowledged that she had always associated grief with loss; however, she now believed that grief has capacity to move us out of our comfort zones and the grief may not be directly related to the loss but to the repositioning out of our comfort zone.

The above example is just indication from the post-survey that the participants definition of grief changed because of this study. This was important because it proved the initial assessment that the grief associated with the loss of their pastor was not even acknowledged or remotely dealt with. Although one respondent initially defined grief as

“dwelling on a particular circumstance for a long period of time,” this respondent also acknowledged that they do not deal with grief at all because they do not dwell on their circumstances but tries not to think about the situation or circumstance at all. However, in the post-survey, the same respondent acknowledged they were in fact grieving. They acknowledged the very real presence of grief, particularly around the retirement of Pastor Emeritus. The respondent stated, “grief began when I realized before retirement that things were not the same and would never be.”

In many of the journal reflections, respondents all agreed that the grief associated with the retirement of Pastor Emeritus was never faced. They all acknowledged in some capacity that the memories created under his leadership were unforgettable and while they celebrated his retirement, the grief may not have been for him, but for the uncertainty of the future. The grief experienced was about those people who made up the whole of Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago - those who had died, left the church, moved out of the vicinity, and decided to leave during the transition of Pastor Emeritus. An overwhelming majority of the respondents understood that grief can be related to change. Whether it be a change in one another, friendships, marriage, family members or even growth.

The second major finding is that participants acknowledged that the Pastor Emeritus experienced grief as well. The respondents overwhelmingly suggested that Pastor Emeritus either should have left much earlier than he did, or that he was still physically present but had checked out years prior to his actual retirement. Respondents referenced how difficult it was for Pastor Emeritus to retire from his pastoral duties, probably due to the fact of his inability to find identity outside of being Pastor of Calvary

Baptist Church of Chicago. He held that responsibility for forty years. The respondents were able to make the connections to the difficulty some of them had faced life's changes and the grief they had around those. A respondent again made the correlation to her own loss of identity as an empty nester and the shift in her role as mother as her children transitioned into adulthood. Another respondent made the connection to her newfound role in the life of her now college-age child. This respondent acknowledged that she is grieving her child growing into adulthood and is struggling with the transition and her new role in his life. Both mothers made the connection to how Pastor Emeritus must have felt with the prospect of shifting into life where he is no longer the Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago. After sharing these thoughts, many of the participants were able to express their compassion for Pastor Emeritus, an emotion that was not easily expressed prior to this shared time together. They collectively acknowledged the empathy they now had for Pastor Emeritus and his struggle with retiring.

The third major finding is that participants were able to reflect on their grief and make the connection between grief and hope. Many of the respondents acknowledged that their grief primarily centered around the welfare and the future of their church at the retirement of Pastor Emeritus. One respondent stated very clearly that her grief was about what her church could be and how the future appeared gloom. She explained that she was now able to hold together the sense of loss but also maintain a feeling that God continues to bless and will carry her through all of life's challenges. Another respondent stated that "it was time for [Pastor Emeritus] to leave, therefore the grief was only in regard to the future." Both respondents admit that they were unable to see beyond their grief because

they were unable to envision the future beyond Pastor Emeritus. They both admitted to asking the questions, “What will happen now?”

Participants were able to conclude that grief and hope travel together. A respondent made the connection between the Shunammite woman who refused to accept the loss of her son and instead anger persisted. However, when she was given the space to express that anger and frustration to the Prophet Elisha, she was able to regain her hope. The same respondent made the connection between Calvary and the fact that there was anger in what had transpired; however, she stated it was not until now that they were able to express their frustration and anger and move toward wholeness and forward in hope.

Summary

At the conclusion of the focus group sessions, the participants expressed interest in learning more about grief and the processing of it. These individuals were empowered to acknowledge and express their shared grief in community. They also felt that they were able to better express their personal grief to one another as many shared more personal stories of their personal grief experiences. When asked about the next steps, the participants suggested that more grief work should be done for the wider congregation.

I believe that further study could take place on the impact this grief work would have on congregations prior to the calling of a next pastor. Perhaps if this work is done prior to a new pastor being called to serve a congregation, churches, and pastors would experience an even smoother pastoral transition.

Unfortunately, I am no longer the pastor at Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago. I believe that had this work been completed prior to my arrival, there would have been

better circumstances leading to a more successful ministry. Since the congregation had not dealt with the grief, grief certainly impacted the transitory period and caused a severe lack of the congregation's desire to be active in ministry. This desire or lack thereof was most likely based in their hurt and pain and was too much to overcome.

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